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Tavern Profile: The Beached Leviathan

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In the past, those sailing the Sword Coast feared the pirate vessel called Leviathan. Her captain, Harrag, led a crew of unscrupulous pirates who plundered ship after ship. As far as Captain Harrag was concerned, no ship was too formidable a target and no treasure was too small.

The great vessel's domination of the sea ended when a great storm swept the *Leviathan* onto the shores of Neverwinter, permanently beaching it in the wreckage of the city's docks. Harrag took this as an omen and ended his pirating days, releasing his crew from service and retiring to a more genteel lifestyle in his new home. For his first task, he chose to convert the wreck of his ship into a place of business.

The Leviathan Beached

The Beached Leviathan is a three-level inn located on the docks of Neverwinter, as described on page 154 of the *Neverwinter Campaign Setting*™. The details that follow are intended to supplement information presented there.

Because of the nature of his establishment and his past career as a pirate, Harrag uses ship terms to differentiate various areas in his tavern. For example, Harrag calls the lowest level of the tavern the hold. It contains a kitchen and a bar area with many tables. Though the oak and cherry woodwork here is fancy, it has seen better days after having sustained damage from bar fights over the years. Nautical equipment and some of the spoils of Harrag's travels adorn the walls. Some examples of the latter include sahuagin skulls and weapons, preserved shark fins, and a giant crab's carapace. A secret door in the bar area leads below to the bilge, which houses Harrag's personal treasures.

The second level, which Harrag calls the quarters, has nine small rooms, two larger suites, and a mid-sized room. The latter room contains a stove for tenants who wish to prepare their own meals. Several simple but beautiful tapestries of seascapes lend color to the walls of the larger rooms. On the starboard side of the ship, a platform called the stardeck juts out, providing an exterior seating area.

The third level, called the deck, has tables and chairs for overflow seating in its central area. For a hefty price, patrons can rent one of the pair of private parlors that Harrag set up at the fore. The aft has storage rooms, atop which sit Harrag's personal quarters.

An open-sided spiral stair connects the three levels, winding around the central mast. In addition, a 5-foot-by-5-foot shaft connects all three levels, allowing a hoist platform to move supplies (and sometimes people) from one level to the next. Harrag or one of his staff members operate the platform from the deck by using a boom on the central mast that

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Harrag outfitted with a threefold purchase block and tackle. A series of bells affixed near each platform allows for coded communication between the decks.

From Sea to Shore

Over the years, the Beached Leviathan has become a hot spot of drinking, gambling, and business activity in Neverwinter, and Harrag welcomes all of it with a hearty grin. The tavern often hosts troupes of entertainers who perform in the hold and on the deck. When these entertainers perform on the deck, those within the tavern can hear the music from any spot.

Harrag thinks of the Beached Leviathan in much the same way he did when it was a sailing vessel. He loves it and will do everything in his power to protect it (and his regulars and staff). He is proud of the prestige associated with his tavern but does not show it, instead holding to his taciturn exterior. This said, he enjoys the occasional bar fight and isn't above jumping into the fray.

Lord Neverember also enjoys the status the tavern holds. The dealings that take place in the tavern rarely go unnoticed by his agents, who frequent the bar at all hours. Neverember considers the Beached Leviathan his best resource in ferreting out those who might move against him, given the opposition he faces in the nearby Blacklake District.

The Tavern's Seedy Underbelly

In addition to providing a good time for sailors and townsfolk with some coin to spend, the Beached Leviathan is home to many seedy goings-on. On any given night, nefarious denizens of Neverwinter converge on the tavern to broker in stolen goods, secret information, press-gang victims, and assassination plots.

The most recent criminal development is an increase in covert press-gang activities. The Beached Leviathan serves as a meeting point for secret slavers who have no qualms about abducting homeless townsfolk and refugees. Those who are captured are quickly moved out of the area. For the time being, and as long as nobody important goes missing, Lord Neverember has decided not to intercede in these activities, but he will step in if he sees that it's in his interest to do so.

In terms of personal rivalries that play out on a regular basis within the tavern, the activities of a pair of human identical twins named Gustaf and Rodrik periodically create a chaotic atmosphere within the Beached Leviathan. Gustaf is a purveyor of stolen treasures and magic who frequents the tavern to make contacts and ply his trade, reveling in the thrill of his dark dealings. Rodrik is Gustaf's "better half," and he seeks to thwart his brother's dealings, hoping that his brother will give up his dangerous ways. Each twin often takes on the persona of the other to thwart the other's plans in some manner. Neither, however, lifts a sword against the other.

Those who pay attention to their surroundings can find all manner of vice or foul plots inside the hull of the Beached Leviathan. For instance, agents of Valindra Shadowmantle often meet here to discuss their matron's plans to bring down Lord Neverember, or to feed disinformation to any of his agents who might be listening.

The Crew of the Beached Leviathan

Though the *Leviathan* no longer sails the seas, it nevertheless has a crew. Harrag employs a capable staff, and each member thinks of Harrag as being a fair, if stern, employer. Four human barmaids—Jyseria, Sandrine, Willow, and Andrella—see to the needs of the patrons and act as housekeepers for the quarters. Harrag splits his bartending duties with Grennel, an aging dwarf female. Feng, an enormous half-orc male, serves as bouncer, and an eccentric human male nicknamed Tabnab is the tavern's cook. Last but not least, Puk, a human boy, acts as a messenger for staff members, in exchange for ale and stories.

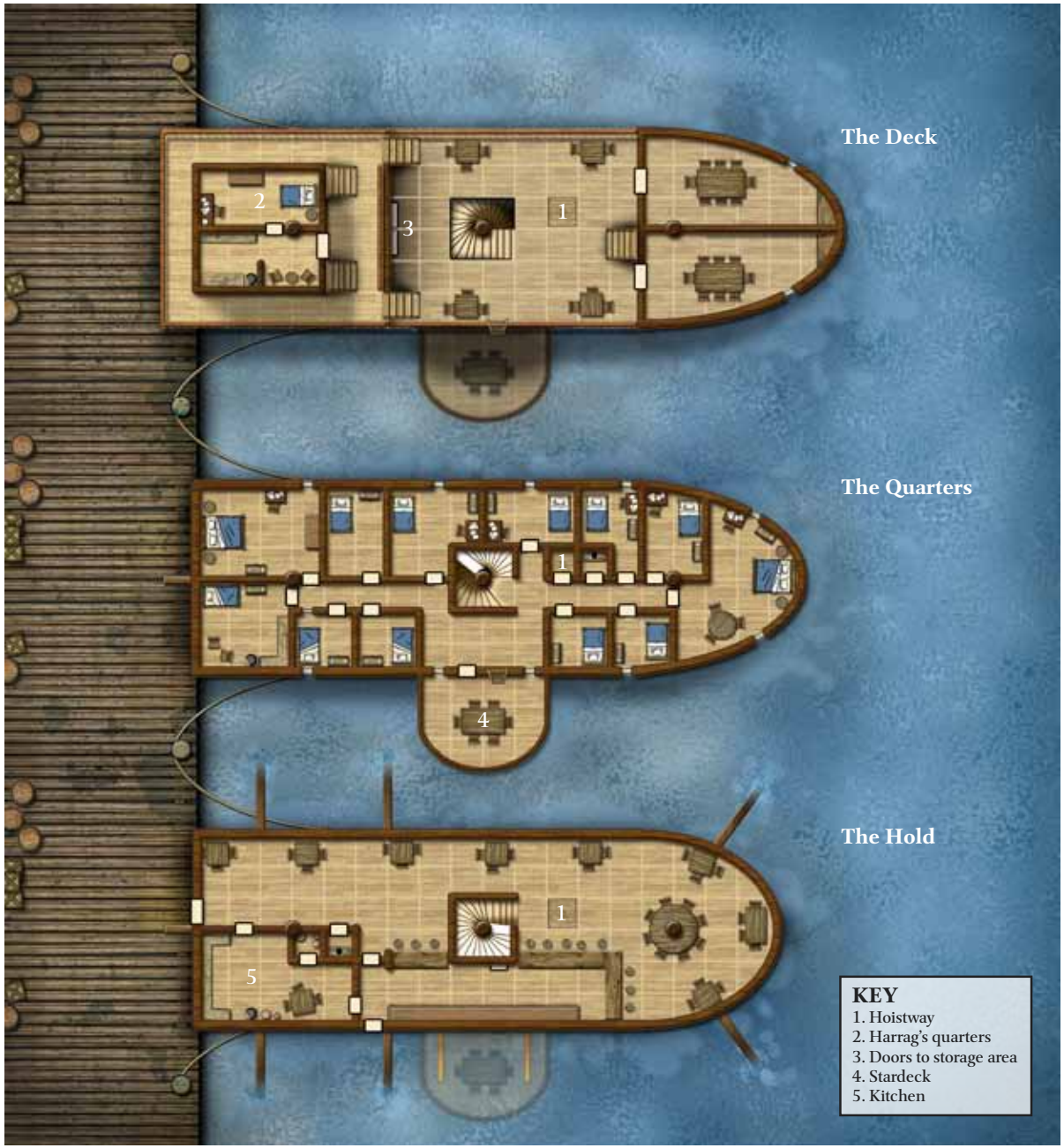
In recent years, the inn has also become home to many regulars. These regulars have taken to referring to themselves, each other, and their activities while within the tavern in nautical terms. To a lesser extent, these regulars are also a more informal part of Harrag's crew.

The Captain

The regulars and staff of the Beached Leviathan refer to Harrag as Captain Harrag (or the captain), and he takes no small amount of pleasure in this. He treats his regulars as loyal and trusted patrons, and his gruff exterior hides a sometimes surprising level of compassion for the plight of others. None of this prevents him from being as much a cutthroat in his shoreside business as he was when he captained the *Leviathan*. Additionally, he prides himself on being an independent soul amid a sea of cronies, and he's not afraid to state as much to anyone who implies or states outright that he might be someone's lackey.

Though Harrag knows that Lord Neverember has his hands in a lot of things, Harrag hasn't yet learned just how much he has come under the control of the lord. Harrag owes a few people some large favors, and he's paying them back over time with useful bits of information gathered from conversations held in his tavern. What he doesn't know is that each of these people is an agent of the lord, and one of them changed his shadow into a spy of sorts (see "Harrag's Shadow" below). Each of these agents also attempts to subtly guide Harrag into making decisions that support the lord's overall plans.

Only a few of his staff and regular patrons have gleaned the knowledge regarding Neverember's agents, though none have discovered that Harrag's shadow has been turned against him. Those who have identified an agent fear that such news would cause Harrag to close the tavern in a fit of anger at being used by Lord Neverember in this manner. To prevent the inevitable conflict that would occur between the lord and their captain, as well as to avoid the fallout



from it, the staff members keep watch. Sometimes, if they feel it would be dangerous not to do so, they help keep Harrag in the dark regarding Neverember's manipulations by distracting him or covering up something that would give him insight into his situation. Andrella (see "The Mate") is the one exception to how the staff handles the situation: She actively works against anything that might hurt Harrag.

The Mate

On board a ship, the mate is the captain's right hand, providing counsel and leading the crew in the captain's absence. The Beached Leviathan's mate is a middle-aged human female named Andrella.

Shortly after Harrag established the Beached Leviathan, he came upon Andrella, a destitute widow whose husband had been killed for owing substantial gambling debts. Harrag felt for the lonely lady and took her in, providing her with a room, a standoffish sort of respect, and work. In the time since, Andrella has not only developed a fierce inner strength but also has come to care for Harrag deeply. Thus far she has kept her affections secret because, after realizing that Harrag has a free spirit and a pattern of pushing away those who get too close to him, she feels that they are both better served by her maintaining a practical, no-nonsense manner in all areas of her life.

As the first barmaid Harrag hired, Andrella manages the other barmaids and also works closely with the rest of the crew, who respect her for her ability to handle tense situations with a level head. Only Feng and Tabnab refer to her as mate, and it's a long-running (though somewhat bittersweet from Andrella's point of view) joke between the three of them. Harrag generally dismisses their jocularity with a grunt.

Though Andrella is savvy and observant enough to understand that Lord Neverember has people working to ensure that Harrag's business efforts always benefit the lord in some manner, her attempts to make them known to Harrag in the past always

failed. Harrag values her as an employee, but he feels that she doesn't have a grasp on local politics, which sometimes frustrates Andrella. She gave up trying to point things out to him awhile ago and now takes matters into her own hands by attempting to stymie anything she believes would bring harm to Harrag. Unfortunately for Harrag, she doesn't always succeed.

Especially perceptive or insightful characters who spend enough time with Andrella might uncover Andrella's feelings for her captain, plus understand her concern with what would happen if he finds out.

The Regulars

Several of the regulars of the Beached Leviathan have picked up nicknames that tie into various crew positions on a ship.

The Helmswoman

Much as the helmsman of a ship steers the vessel away from danger, the helmswoman of the Beached Leviathan steers the tavern away from violence. Umi, a female watersoul genasi (and cousin to Len-jes, Neverember's harbormaster), is the de-facto unpaid enforcer in the tavern. Her considerable bravado is matched only by her skill with a sword. If the chaos in the tavern becomes more than Feng can handle, either he or Andrella calls upon Umi. When she steps in, her reward is free drinks for the rest of the evening.

Although Umi keeps a particularly watchful eye over Harrag, worrying over the day when Neverember's manipulations become known to him, she also has some other activities that are less than savory. Secretly, Umi is involved in Neverwinter's growing press-gang activities. For a price, she ensures that those with people to move (such as representatives of the Dead Rats) meet up with those who are willing to move them. She keeps her business hidden well, but if the adventurers learn of her activities and confront her, they might gain an enemy.

The Bosun

On board a ship, the bosun is in charge of the daily running of the ship. In much the same way, Bobrik Highmantle, a burly dwarf male, is a well-known fixture in the tavern and has gained the appellation from Harrag for that very reason, though in this case it's Harrag's way of teasing the dwarf. Harrag is the only person who dares to joke around with Bobrik.

Bobrik occupies a seat at the bar, where he drains mug after mug of dwarven root wine. Though he might snarl at those around him, he has nothing but love for his pet monkey, which he has named Monkey. All the regulars treat him with wary respect right up until the moment when he explodes into a drunken rage, which he does upon occasion. At that point, Feng, Umi, and Harrag drag him from the place and keep him out for a few days until he loses the resentful fire in his eyes. As yet, nobody knows what causes these rages to erupt, and nobody is willing to ask.

The Lookout

The Beached Leviathan's lookout is a young human male named Markul, though nobody calls him the lookout to his face. In fact, only staff members refer to him by this name, and they do so in low tones.

Markul spends his time strolling the tavern, observing the goings-on. He learns of iniquitous doings within the tavern's walls and isn't above taking bribes from a patron to keep his mouth shut regarding any activities Harrag or his staff would not stomach. The other members of the crew and staff don't realize he is the richest among them, having put the tavern's seedier individuals under his thumb.

The Caulker

On board a ship, the caulker keeps the ship in good repair. In the Beached Leviathan, the caulker, so named by Harrag, is the half-elf male Ettain.

Ettain is a skilled carpenter whom Harrag employs to repair damage and craft new furnishings for the

BEACHED LEVIATHAN SLANG

The crew of the Beached Leviathan shares a language all their own, which was built around nautical terms.

Albatross: Someone bringing bad luck to the tavern.
Ballast: A drunkard.
Batten the Hatches: Shut your mouth.
Bowsprit: A sword, especially a large one.
Capstan: A cask of ale or wine.
Deadlights: Eyes, especially those of a drunk person.
Doldrums: Boredom.
Drink the Coin: Become a member of the crew.
Feeding the Fishes: Referring to a crew member not currently in the tavern.
Flash Packet: A weakling.
Furole: Magic.
Heavy Packet: A strong person.
Heel: To fall over.
Kiss the Lady: Be kind to Andrella.
Lash Up: Finish drinking.
Place the Black Spot: Agree to dislike someone.
Press-Gang: A rowdy group of patrons.
Privateer: A newcomer to the tavern.
Scrimshaw: Writings or etchings.
Scupper: One's mouth.
Short-Handed: Lacking a barmaid to take orders.
Slipped His or Her Rope: Referring to a patron who has passed out or is otherwise incapacitated.
Wag: A patron of the tavern who is not a crew member.

tavern. The half-elf knows every inch of the tavern (including Harrag's chambers and the bilge storage area) and is an excellent source of information regarding the specifics of the tavern's layout. Because he prefers to stay employed by Harrag, he doesn't talk about any of this or he'd lose more than the paying work he receives from Harrag. If Harrag ever needs help, though, he'd be willing to share his secrets if he thinks it will aid Harrag in some way.

The Chanteyman

A middle-aged dragonborn male named Korin is sometimes called the chanteyman of the Beached Leviathan. This friendly bard often leads the patrons of the tavern in sea chanties, folk songs, and dances. He wanders throughout the tavern while playing a large flute, taking breaks to accept tips and drinks.

Every so often, Korin sings a soulful dirge about a man who lost his family to cultists. None realize that the subject of this song is Korin himself, whose family was slaughtered by members of the Ashmadai cult a few months ago. Korin knows of the cult's home in nearby Vellgard Manor and is steeling himself for the day when he wreaks his vengeance. If the adventurers query him about his song, he might reveal more information and ask them for help in his quest.

The Hands

Various other patrons of the Beached Leviathan have earned the title of hand, though the term is bandied about informally. Feel free to develop such characters as you see fit. If the adventurers patronize the Beached Leviathan enough, the other crew members might invite them to become hands after they prove themselves in a way that either amuses the patrons or assists Harrag.

The Feuding Twins

The statistics for the brothers are identical. If the adventurers attack one twin, the other leaps to the aid of his brother. Although Gustaf is fine with killing an attacker, Rodrik seeks only to subdue interlopers.

Feuding Twin **Level 5 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 200

HP 61; **Bloodied** 30 **Initiative** +8
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 17 **Perception** +9
Speed 6

Traits

Combat Advantage
The twin deals 1d6 extra damage against any creature granting combat advantage to it. If this combat advantage is gained by flanking with the twin's brother, it instead deals 2d6 extra damage against that creature.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Rapier** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The twin can shift 2 squares before the attack and shift 2 squares after the attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage.

⸸ **Repositioning Strikes** (weapon) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Melee 1 (one or two creatures); +8 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage, and the twin can slide the target 1 square.
Miss: Half damage.

Triggered Actions

Brother's Parry ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An attack hits the twin's brother while they are adjacent to each other.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The twin's brother gains a +4 power bonus to all defenses against the triggering attack.

Skills Acrobatics +11, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9 (Rodrik only), Insight +9, Stealth +11, Streetwise +9, Thievery +11 (Gustaf only)

Str 10 (+2)	**Dex** 18 (+6)	**Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 13 (+3)	**Int** 12 (+3)	**Cha** 14 (+4)

Alignment good (Rodrik); evil (Gustaf) **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, rapier

Harrag's Shadow

One of Lord Neverember's agents has transformed Harrag's shadow into an undead creature as a means to keep an eye on Harrag. With a DC 21 Perception check, the characters might notice that Harrag's shadow doesn't always mimic his movements.

If Harrag learns of Neverember's manipulation of him or plots against him in any way, the shadow attacks Harrag, and other agents in the tavern join it.

Harrag's Shadow **Level 9 Brute**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 400

HP 116; **Bloodied** 58 **Initiative** +6
AC 21, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 21 **Perception** +5
Speed 0, fly 6 (hover); phasing Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic

Traits

Stealth Mode
When not in combat, the shadow can allow other creatures to move through it as if its square were unoccupied.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Shadow Slam** (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 8 necrotic damage.

⸸ **Shadow Lock** (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The shadow must not have a creature grabbed.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 8 damage, and the shadow makes a secondary attack against the target.
Secondary Attack: +12 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The shadow grabs the target (escape DC 17). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage.

Skills Stealth +11

Str 20 (+9)	**Dex** 15 (+6)	**Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 16 (+7)	**Int** 8 (+3)	**Cha** 17 (+7)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common

About the Author

Craig Campbell is an architect by day and a D&D player, DM, and freelance designer by night. He has written for the RPGA, D&D® Insider, and *Dragon*® and *Dungeon*® magazines, with more than twenty articles and adventures to his credit. Although he currently lives in Atlanta, Georgia, he knows he'll always be a yankee at heart.

Enemies & Allies:
All That Glitters

By Robert J. Schwalb

Illustration by James Ryman

"I've told you everything. Please–I don't know where he is."

Catseye pinned the gnome against the wall and held her dagger to his slender throat. The razor-sharp blade inflicted a fresh wound with each nervous swallow.

"Oh, little Rat," she said, peering coldly into his wide, staring eyes, "I believe you. I really do. The thing is, you haven't been much help, have you?"

The gnome risked a cough. His eyes bulged as they sought out the hand holding the blade to his neck. "I–I am sorry."

"You were supposed to have a nose for these things. Why, just the other day, Sticky-Fingers told me there was no one better at sniffing out secrets." She shifted the blade so that the point bit into the bulbous tip the gnome's nose.

"Oh, yes? That was . . . er . . . very nice of Sticky," muttered the gnome. His eyes crossed from watching the dagger's pointed tip.

"I'm disappointed, Rat. I'm no closer to finding Olek than when I started."

Her voice dropped to a growl, low and dangerous.

"You've wasted my time."

"Apologies, mistress. Sincerest. If I knew anything about this man, Olek, I would share it with you–"

He stopped. His eyes widened.

"Sticky-Fingers, you say?"

Catseye bared her teeth.

"But . . . he's dead," whispered the gnome.

"Yes. Yes he is." The blade flicked and drove through the gnome's eye and into his small skull. He was dead before he could scream.

"And now, so are you."

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Fallcrest is a true Nentir Vale crossroads and a favorite stop for travelers. Whether hauling trade to Hammerfast in the east or setting off to root out kobolds in the west, new faces appear in the modest town all the time. Most visitors don't linger long before adventure or the promise of wealth lures them away. Nevertheless, some newcomers choose to stay, snared by the town's charms and won over by its people.

One recent arrival to Fallcrest is an unusual young woman named Catseye. She has the adventurer's look about her, yet she seems content to while away her time in the small shop she runs near the Lower Quays. Who is she? What brought her here? And what, if anything, is she after? These questions and others keep the gossips' tongues wagging but, if they knew the truth, they would think twice before nosing about.

Catseye

The slim woman behind the counter looks up when the bell hanging above the door rings. She might have been pretty years ago, but the chill in her eyes suggest that suitors now look elsewhere for courtship. Her cold smile vanishes as quickly as it appears.

Two years ago, the last place Catseye would have expected to end up was a trinket shop in a borderland town. That was before circumstances shattered her plans, led her astray from her mission, and landed her in Fallcrest. Still, the shop provides useful income, saving her the trouble of resorting to familiar but bothersome solutions such as thievery and murder. It also makes for a useful cover story while she scours the streets for the husband who betrayed her and the treasure that he stole.

To the observant, Catseye's easy movements and fearsome demeanor—the product of years spent prowling dungeons and slaughtering monsters—reveal her as more than a simple shopkeeper. She moves with a grace and bearing more suited to a veteran duelist, and her eyes track her customers wherever they go. Reticent and curt, she despises chitchat and disdains those who press her about her past.

Catseye conceals a darker secret, however: Although she was an adventurer and remains one still, she was first and foremost a thief and a killer. She plundered dungeons because the treasure was better than what she could pry from dead merchants' hands.

During her freebooting days, the cutpurse and cutthroat ran with several mercenaries on dozens of expeditions, but she made few lasting friendships; Catseye entered into associations as simple business arrangements and nothing more. The one exception was Olek, the charming rogue who found a way past her stern demeanor to the small heart that it guarded.

Catseye and Olek loved as fiercely as they fought; indeed, their tempestuous desire flared at times into near violence. As part of various crews, they raided dungeon after dungeon and grew rich in wealth and fame. They were wild, courageous, and doomed.

Their relationship fell to pieces because of a glittering stone. The jewel's value was great, but greater still was the magic imbued within it. From the moment they gazed upon the fabled *Eye of Ru-Ta*, a fist-sized sapphire believed to have been the eponymous desert king's crown jewel, they each hungered to possess it. Their bickering quickly exploded into violence, lover attempting in vain to overcome lover until, finally, a lucky blow from Olek knocked Catseye senseless. When she came to, he had gone, taking the gemstone with him.

Two years later, Catseye is still hunting Olek, following every rumor and every lead toward her goal: to confront him, kill him, and claim the jewel. She has yet to locate her husband, but she knows that he is close.

Catseye has wasted no time in establishing contacts with the community's most dangerous and untrustworthy citizens. Using fear and threats, she cows the weaker members of the underworld into acting as her eyes and ears. Those who are not easily intimidated (or who fail her) wind up face-down in the river, or spend every waking moment watching their backs.

Catseye's skills remain undiminished; she's a gifted safe-cracker, second-story person, and cutpurse. Moreover, her contacts make her an important person to know. For the right price, she can turn up secrets about nearly anyone in town.

Using Catseye

Catseye is a well-connected and powerful underworld figure in Fallcrest (or another modest-sized town in your game setting). She's useful to adventurers who are chasing down information or looking to offload some ill-gotten gains. On the other hand, she can be a dangerous foe if the adventurers get on her bad side.

As an ally, the best way to introduce Catseye is through her shop. She pays fair prices for gemstones, art objects, and magic items, and offers similar goods for sale. Her shop stocks common items along with a few uncommon finds (including the one rare item described below).

Catseye supplies information for a reasonable fee or in exchange for other information. She is especially interested in solid leads regarding her husband's whereabouts.

If Catseye does enough business with the adventurers to trust them, she might recruit them to help track down her husband in exchange for a special trinket found in her shop. In this way, she can act as a patron for a few levels until the heroes graduate into the paragon tier.

Alternatively, Catseye can serve as the party's antagonist. She is especially suited as an adversary for

do-gooder groups who stick their noses in where they don't belong. In this case, the characters might stumble across the item described below as a clue while investigating a rash of murders and crimes sweeping through Fallcrest.

Catseye	**Level 9 Elite Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 800
HP 188; **Bloodied** 94	**Initiative** +11
AC 23, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21	**Perception** +12
Speed 6	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Traits	
Cunning Escape	
If Catseye starts her turn subject to a dazing, immobilizing, restraining, or stunning effect, she can immediately make a saving throw against that effect, even if it is not normally ended by a save.	
Standard Actions	
Dagger (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d4 + 7 damage, or 6d4 + 7 damage if Catseye has combat advantage against the target.	
Thrown Dagger (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +14 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d4 + 7 damage, and the target grants combat advantage (save ends).	
Darting Blades ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: Catseye uses *dagger* and *thrown dagger* in whatever order she likes, and she shifts up to half her speed between the attacks.	
Move Actions	
Acrobatic Escape ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied	
Effect: Catseye shifts up to her speed.	
Triggered Actions	
Swift Blade ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An adjacent enemy makes an attack against Catseye.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Catseye uses *dagger* against the triggering enemy.	
Skills Stealth +14, Streetwise +11, Thievery +14	
Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 21 (+9) **Wis** 17 (+7)	
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 14 (+6)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment leather armor, 10 daggers, thieves' tools	

Catseye is a ruthless killer, and she's not one to let a grudge slide. Her preferred methods include ambush and subterfuge, and she's not above using poison to take out an opponent. If the adventurers manage to corner her, chances are she'll have a few henchmen nearby (use the statistics for human thugs and human duelists presented in *Monster Vault*™).

All That Glitters

Anyone looking for Catseye should start at her shop near the Lower Quays in Fallcrest. It stands on a side street, facing some ruins and the bluffs beyond. Although Catseye keeps irregular hours, she usually opens for business sometime after lunch and closes just before dusk.

Her shop is a plain building with barred windows and a single, stout wooden door. Shelves and display cases laden with trinkets, baubles, and curios crowd its interior. Although most of her merchandise is of little interest to adventurers, Catseye keeps a few common magic items on hand, along with the occasional special find like the *black star pendant*.

Black Star Pendant

The black star pendant is a complex, thirteen-pointed star wrought from silver. It contains a sliver of shadow-substance, the raw matter discarded by the primordials at creation's dawn. Such raw material is both rare and powerful. When harnessed, it bestows upon its user the power to meld with darkness and become living shadow.

Black Star Pendant	Level 15+ Rare
A black stone in the middle of this star-shaped pendant twists and turns as if handled by some ghostly hand.	
Lvl 15 +3 25,000 gp	Lvl 25 +5 625,000 gp
Lvl 20 +4 125,000 gp	Lvl 30 +6 3,125,000 gp
Neck Slot	
Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will	
Property	
You gain an item bonus to Stealth checks equal to the item's enhancement bonus. In addition, if you start your turn in darkness, you gain phasing until the end of your turn.	
Utility Power ✦ **Daily** (Minor Action)	
Effect: You are insubstantial until the end of your next turn.	

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb is an award-winning game designer who has contributed to or developed over one hundred roleplaying game titles for Dungeons & Dragons®, *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*, *A Song of Ice and Fire RPG*, *Star Wars RPG*, and the *d20 System*™. Some of his most recent work for Wizards of the Coast can be found in *Monster Manual*® 3, *Player's Handbook*® 3, and *Martial Power*™ 2 and also in the pages of both *Dragon*® and *Dungeon*® magazines. Robert lives in Tennessee.

DARK SUN
CAMPAIGN SETTING

Eye on Dark Sun

The Ravenous

By Rodney Thompson

Illustration by Todd Harris

Magic brought the world of Athas to ruin and transformed its gluttonous wielders in ways both great and terrible. The successful spellcasters among the power-mad gorged themselves on arcane lore and evolved—first into sorcerer-kings and then partly into dragons. Other dabblers in the arcane that succumbed to the temptation of easy power suffered more dire consequences. For these unenviable souls, defiling magic became a part of their being; far from raising them to new heights, it warped them physically and mentally into something debased—and ravenous.

The ravenous are defilers consumed by the very magic that they wield. Whatever made them human—or elf, dwarf, or other race—has been consumed and replaced by the need to defile until nothing living remains anywhere on Athas. Their ravaged bodies bear the marks of constant exposure to defiling magic, which has burned away their flesh in patches and left them hideous and gaunt. The people of Athas unfortunate enough to meet the ravenous might mistake them for undead creatures, such as liches or death knights, but they would be wrong; the ravenous still live.

The sorcerer-kings regard the creatures' hunger for corruption as contemptible and dangerous; consequently, they keep the ravenous at arm's length. Some arcane tyrants will employ ravenous as agents if the creatures retain enough of their minds to operate at near-normal levels. Others, such as Andropinis of Balic and Lalali-Puy of Gulg, refuse to associate with the creatures and have declared them outlaws.

The more self-aware among the ravenous sense their remaining time slipping away as the power they wield consumes their minds. They seek to make the most of their remaining days and are willing to take incredible risks to achieve their goals. Some ravenous seek revenge on someone they blame for their state—a mentor or a templar that pushed them to use defiling magic, for example—while others seek a way to slake their thirst for defiling and keep from sacrificing more of themselves.

Lore

Arcana DC 20: The ravenous are created by prolonged exposure to defiling magic. Whereas the sorcerer-kings mastered this arcane energy and used it to transform themselves into demigods, the ravenous wielded defiling recklessly, without proper control, and paid the price. The defiling merged with them to become essential to their existence.

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The bodies of the ravenous are infused with defiling magic, and it sustains them—at a cost. As they move through the world, the creatures feed on the life forces of plants and creatures without conscious thought. When such fodder becomes scarce, their integral defiling magic turns on them and eats away at their own flesh. Consequently, ravenous often appear skeletal, emaciated, and patchy, like gaunt, walking corpses. Contrary to appearances, however, they remain among the living. In areas abundant with life, they can sustain themselves for long stretches, never suffering the decay that withers their less fortunate brethren.

The signs of a ravenous presence are unmistakable. In villages where they dwell, crops wither and die for no apparent reason, cattle become sick, and wells spoil. In city-states, on the rare occasion that a ravenous slips past the guards, neighborhoods fall victim to an inexplicable illness that leaves residents emaciated and malnourished. Such citizens can count themselves fortunate compared to townspeople infected with the uncontrollable hunger of the ravenous. Such thralls arise from creatures caught in the vicinity of a powerful burst of defiling magic unleashed by a ravenous. Their hunger to again experience the sensation of defiling subsequently drives them to follow the ravenous that created them.

Encounters

Given their appearance and corrupt qualities, the ravenous do not easily gain allies; however, the less ravaged among them—who still possess bodies capable of passing for human, elf, or whatever race birthed them—might garner allies of their ilk.

In addition, the ravenous keep a few thralls that serve them in exchange for being allowed to remain in their presence.

Ravenous Sorcerer

The bulk of the ravenous on Athas began as spellcasters. Known collectively as sorcerers, these powerful magic users cast spells that drain life energy and use it for power. Ravenous sorcerers prefer to incapacitate their enemies from a distance and then close in to finish them off with their *withering grasp*.

Ravenous Sorcerer **Level 13 Elite Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 1,600

HP 196; **Bloodied** 98 **Initiative** +7
AC 27, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 25 **Perception** +9
Speed 7
Resist 10 necrotic
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Defiling Aura (necrotic) ✦ **Aura** 1
Any living creature that ends its turn in the aura takes 10 necrotic damage.

Standard Actions

Withering Grasp (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened until the end of the sorcerer's next turn.

Ray of Exile (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one or two creatures); +18 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d8 + 3 necrotic damage, and the target cannot willingly move closer to the sorcerer until the end of its next turn.

Ravenous Disintegrate (necrotic) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +18 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d8 + 4 necrotic damage. If the target is vulnerable to necrotic damage, it takes ongoing 20 damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage. If the target is vulnerable to necrotic damage, it takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends).
Second Failed Saving Throw: The target dies.

Life-Draining Burst (cold, necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in the burst); +18 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 4d6 + 4 cold and necrotic damage.
Effect: If at least one creature takes damage from this attack, the sorcerer gains 25 temporary hit points.

Triggered Actions

Ravenous Defiling (necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Trigger: The sorcerer misses an enemy with an attack.
Effect (Free Action): Enemies within 3 squares of the sorcerer take 15 necrotic damage, and the sorcerer rerolls the triggering attack roll.
Special: At the start of any of its turns, the sorcerer can lose 25 hit points to recharge this power.

Skills Arcana +17
Str 10 (+6) **Dex** 13 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 14 (+8) **Int** 22 (+12) **Cha** 10 (+6)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common

Ravenous Champion	Level 13 Elite Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 1,600
HP 252; **Bloodied** 126	**Initiative** +11
AC 29, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 23	**Perception** +8
Speed 7	
Immune immobilized, slowed; **Resist** 10 necrotic	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Traits	
☼ **Defiling Aura** (necrotic) ✦ **Aura** 1	
Any living creature that ends its turn in the aura takes 10 necrotic damage.	
Defiler's Grasp (necrotic)	
The champion deals 1d10 extra necrotic damage on attacks made against immobilized or prone creatures.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Longsword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one or two creatures); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d8 + 3 damage.	
⸸ **Defiler's Mark** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d8 + 3 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the champion's next turn.	
Effect: The target is marked by the champion until the end of the champion's next turn. A creature marked by the champion also has vulnerable 10 necrotic.	
Triggered Actions	
⸸ **Champion's Rebuke** (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: A creature marked by the champion and within 3 squares of it uses an attack power that does not include the champion as a target.	
Effect (Opportunity Action): The champion teleports up to 3 squares to a square adjacent to the triggering creature and uses *longsword* against it.	
Ravenous Defiling (necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied	
Trigger: The champion misses an enemy with an attack.	
Effect (Free Action): Enemies within 3 squares of the champion take 15 necrotic damage, and the champion rerolls the triggering attack roll.	
Special: At the start of any of its turns, the champion can lose 30 hit points to recharge this power.	
Str 23 (+12) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 14 (+8)	
Con 14 (+8) **Int** 14 (+8) **Cha** 10 (+6)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	
Equipment longsword	

Ravenous Champion

Soldiers, warriors, and other martially trained creatures that fell victim to the ravenous hunger, champions are masters of melee combat who have been augmented by magic to make them more deadly.

Ravenous Thrall

Ravenous thralls are sickly humans, elves, dwarves, and other humanoid creatures that have been tainted by the hunger of a ravenous. Ravenous thralls remain autonomous, but their addiction to the presence of their defiling masters keeps them on a short leash.

Ravenous Thrall	Level 13 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid	XP 800
HP 134; **Bloodied** 67	**Initiative** +10
AC 27, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 25	**Perception** +6
Speed 6	
Resist 10 necrotic	
Traits	
Swarming Grasp	
A creature grabbed by the thrall takes a -2 penalty to skill checks made to escape the grab for each ravenous thrall adjacent to it.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Bone Battleaxe** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d10 + 5 damage.	
⸸ **Clutching Grab** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 3d10 + 5 damage, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 20).	
⸸ **Bring Low** ✦ **Encounter**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by a creature other than the thrall); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d10 + 10 damage.	
Miss: Half damage.	
Move Actions	
Rapid Advance ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The thrall moves up to its speed + 4 but must end this movement adjacent to an enemy.	
Str 15 (+8) **Dex** 15 (+8) **Wis** 10 (+6)	
Con 22 (+12) **Int** 11 (+6) **Cha** 16 (+9)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment bone battleaxe	

The Ravenous in Combat

At the start of battle, the ravenous send forth their thralls as cannon fodder to soak up enemy attacks. Ravenous champions then pick out the weakest enemies and cull them, while ravenous sorcerers provide support from a distance.

About the Author

Rodney Thompson is an RPG designer at Wizards of the Coast, originally from Chattanooga, Tennessee. His credits for the Dungeons & Dragons® game include *Monster Manual®* 3, the *Dark Sun®* *Campaign Setting*, *Heroes of the Fallen Lands™*, *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms™*, and *Monster Vault™*.

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Rumble in the Valley

A Chaos Scar adventure for characters of levels 6–8

By Dave Chalker

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Introduction

A cunning hobgoblin plans to form a mighty army, uniting the diverse and quarrelsome inhabitants of the Chaos Scar into a fighting force, and lay siege to Restwell Keep. For this ambitious strategy to succeed, he must prove his might and remove a persistent problem: the adventurers.

"Rumble in the Valley" is a Dungeons & Dragons® adventure set in the Chaos Scar. This adventure draws on source material presented in "Keep on the Chaos Scar" (*Dungeon* 176) by Mike Mearls, as well as characters and events in the adventures "Stick in the Mud" (*Dungeon* 171) by Aeryn "Blackdirge" Rudel, "The Lost Library" (*Dungeon* 173) by Peter Lee, "The Hammer Falls" (*Dungeon* 179) by Corwin Riddle, and the Dungeons & Dragons Encounters™ adventure *Keep on the Borderlands* by Chris Sims. Feel free to change the names of places, the personalities involved, and the preceding events to suit your own campaign's history.

Adventure Background

Kodan is an experienced hobgoblin commander, who leads a band of raiders called the Talons, so named for their hit-and-run tactics patterned after those of certain dragons. Hearing of opportunities for wealth and power, he took his band to the Chaos Scar.

The Talons' first mission was to be a simple one: Raid a passing merchant caravan on its way to Restwell Keep. Kodan quickly found that the area was not going to offer the easy pickings he had expected. His band was repelled by a combined force of guards from the keep and the adventurers. As the Talons retreated, though, the group encountered a doppelganger assassin named Linn and a bullywug priest named Primpel, both seeking revenge for the adventurers' previous meddling.

The keep and adventuring parties were constant threats that couldn't be dealt with as long as all the monstrous factions worked on their own. Kodan was struck with an idea: Instead of trying to carve out his own piece of the Chaos Scar, as so many others had done, he could unite all the inhabitants of the Scar under his banner by proving that he was a smart,

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WHO ARE THE TALONS?

These monstrous characters have ties to other published adventures, as described in the Introduction, but your players needn't have played through them. You can replace these creatures with other adversaries from previous adventures in your campaign, or have them be mercenaries who follow Kodan in exchange for wealth and power if his plan succeeds.

Kodan, the hobgoblin leader, is new to this adventure. If the party previously crossed paths with a band of hobgoblins, he can be one that escaped. Alternatively, replace Kodan with a recurring villain from your campaign who has similar qualities.

- Linn, the doppelganger, is a sister to Gordi and Sal, who appeared in the *Keep on the Borderlands* adventure. She wants revenge for the deaths of her brothers.
- Primpel is a bullywug priest who serves the Elder Elemental Eye. He came to the Chaos Scar on pilgrimage, but on discovering the bodies of slain bullywugs (see "Stick in the Mud"), now seeks to destroy the forces of civilization.
- Slik is a kobold trapsmith of the kobold Clan Fireclaw, which was nearly wiped out during the events of "The Lost Library." He magically soaked up a bit of the knowledge around the library and now wants to perfect the art of trapmaking.
- Barulg the Returned is a duergar who swore his soul to infernal powers and was killed during the events of "The Hammer Falls." The devils of the Nine Hells decided to return him to life as an example of their might, hoping that he would inspire other power-seeking creatures to make similar bargains.

capable, and powerful leader. To this end, he began to contact representatives of the caves' inhabitants. Kodan soon encountered others who had experiences similar to his own, and he focused his attention on them.

Using the talents of various monsters seeking revenge, Kodan took over a set of caves and has turned it into a massive trap. He doesn't intend to kill the adventurers in the caves but rather weaken them so that he and his now-reinforced Talons can eliminate them, in full view of emissaries from important Chaos Scar factions. With the adventurers out of the way, and having demonstrated his might, Kodan intends to rule the Chaos Scar.

Adventure Synopsis

The adventurers are summoned by Marz Dyson, a wealthy patron and frequent source of work, about another quest into the Chaos Scar. Dyson explains that elemental creatures are attacking his trade caravans and have been seen coming from a newly spotted cave entrance. He promises wealth and glory, as well as a chance to save innocent lives, if the adventurers investigate the incidents.

In truth, the quest is a ruse. The real Dyson has been captured and replaced by Linn. Kodan has prepared a trap for the adventurers within one of the caves of the Chaos Scar, utilizing the talents of Slik, Primpel, and Barulg.

The adventurers explore the cave, finding it surprisingly easy to navigate. They encounter little trouble until they reach a large chamber containing the wounded body of the true Dyson, guarded by several mud creatures. Entering the chamber triggers a cave-in, blocking the entrance. The only exit is through two sets of tunnels, designed to split the party into two groups and weaken them with traps and hazards to give the Talons the edge in the final battle.

At the end of the tunnels, a small force of sentries loyal to Kodan guard a stone outcropping that looks out over the Chaos Scar valley. The guards have strict orders not to kill the adventurers, but to delay them while Kodan makes final preparations.

In the valley below, witnessed by monstrous emissaries, Kodan and the Talons fight the party in one last showdown. If Kodan defeats the adventurers, he proves his worth to lead the monsters of the Chaos Scar in an attack on Restwell Keep. If he falls, the adventurers end a grave threat to the keep.

The Adventure Begins

When you're ready to begin the adventure, read:

Within the walls of Restwell Keep, you've made a name for yourselves as heroes, ready to protect the innocent, rescue the endangered, and thwart the evil. As you walk along the streets, you're thanked by passersby whom you have helped or those who just know you by reputation.

So you aren't surprised to be called to another adventure at the behest of Marz Dyson, a local human merchant who has been a frequent ally and patron. In the past, he has needed help dealing with the dangers of the Chaos Scar, which are numerous, to clear the way for his trade caravans. Dyson asks you to investigate a possible incursion by elementals that threaten one of his trade routes. As always, he offers to pay well.

"This should be short work for such experienced adventurers as you," the old man says, smiling. Without waiting for your answer, he hands you a map to the spot where he believes the creatures are coming from. He encourages you to leave quickly, for he has another caravan moving through tomorrow.

In fact, the person who the adventurers are meeting with is not Marz Dyson, but the doppelganger Linn, who has replaced the merchant to lure the party into Kodan's trap. She doesn't have the information to answer many questions the adventurers might pose. If pressed, "Dyson" claims that his scouts provided the tip and are back out on patrol.

This excuse might make the adventurers suspicious. With a successful DC 23 Insight check, a character senses that Dyson seems to be upset about something. If challenged, he explains that he is annoyed at the cost of doing business in the keep. (In reality, the doppelganger wants revenge for the death of her brothers.) If the adventurers continue to press him, he excuses himself on the pretext that he has another important meeting to attend.

The fake Dyson pays the party 850 gp up front, with a promise of triple that on successful completion of the mission. If that doesn't persuade the adventurers, the doppelganger increases the offer as needed—she intends for them never to return, so payment isn't a problem.

The map provided by Dyson is detailed and accurate, leading the party right to the cave entrance. The journey is surprisingly quiet for a trip into the Chaos Scar—the first clue that something is not quite right about the mission.

If the characters manage to discover that Dyson is a fake, the doppelganger is willing to reveal what she knows of Kodan's plan. Linn tells the group that Kodan has gained the allegiance of a number of Chaos Scar creatures and seeks to prove his worth by defeating the party. She pleads for her life and tells them that unless they go to the cave, the real Dyson will be killed. If they spare her, she betrays them at the first opportunity.

Entering the Cave

The cave immediately begins to slope downward, twisting to the east. With a successful DC 16 Dungeoneering check, a character notices that the caves aren't entirely natural: Someone has recently done work to improve them.

If the adventurers take time to search more thoroughly, or decide to turn back, you can encourage them to continue forward with the sound of an anguished cry from ahead: the voice of the real Dyson.

Events

The events that follow tell the story of the adventure as it unfolds.

Event 1: Between Rust and a Hard Place

Combat Encounter Level 8 (1,600 XP)

The map for Event 1 shows the entrance and the cavern where Dyson is being held. He is badly injured and needs attention if he is to survive. Once the adventurers enter the cave, the tunnel leading back out starts to collapse.

Light: Torches along the walls of the farther cavern shed bright light.

Monsters: 2 elemental evil mudborn (M), 1 gelatinous cube (G), 2 gluttonous rust monsters (R).

When the adventurers get close enough to see inside, read:

You stand at the entrance to a large chamber, divided into two sections. The more distant half is illuminated by torches on the walls, placed to give you a good view of a sight you were clearly intended to witness.

Your patron Dyson—battered, beaten, and bloody—hangs pitifully from manacles attached by chains to the far wall. There's no way the old man could have arrived before you, and his wounds show that he has suffered long-term abuse.

Surrounding him are two humanoid shapes seemingly made of living mud. Within their chests, covered by the muck, are two wriggling insect-like creatures, whose antennae occasionally poke out of the disgusting slime.

Dyson tries to choke out a warning, but the pain of his injuries, reinforced by a brutal blow from one of the mud creatures, silences him before he can finish. The monsters emit a low gurgling sound as they turn to face you, and the cat-sized insects burst forth, leaving a bubbling mud trail behind them.

Behind you, a loud crashing sound reverberates through the tunnels.

2 Elemental Evil Mudborn (M) **Level 6 Controller**
Medium elemental magical beast (aquatic, earth, water)
XP 250 each

HP 70; **Bloodied** 35 — **Initiative** +7
AC 20, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 16 — **Perception** +6
Speed 5, swim 8 — Low-light vision
Immune disease, poison

Traits

Aquatic
The mudborn can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against any nonaquatic creatures.

Standard Actions

Slippery Slam ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage, and the mudborn can slide the target 1 square.

Mud Ball ✦ At-Will
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). If the target is already slowed, it is instead immobilized (save ends).

Torrent of Mud ✦ Encounter
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target falls prone.
Miss: Half damage.

Triggered Actions

Stick in the Mud ✦ Recharge if the power misses
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the mudborn hits it with a melee attack.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (triggering enemy); +9 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target is grabbed (escape DC 15). Until the grab ends, the target cannot make attacks, and the mudborn gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against it.

Skills Dungeoneering +11, Nature +11

Str 19 (+7)	**Dex** 19 (+7)	**Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 14 (+5)	**Int** 9 (+2)	**Cha** 12 (+4)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Primordial

Gelatinous Cube (G)	**Level 5 Elite Brute**
Large natural beast (blind, ooze)	XP 400
HP 156; **Bloodied** 78	**Initiative** +4
AC 17, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	**Perception** +3
Speed 3, climb 3	Blind, blindsight 5
Immune blinded, gaze effects; **Resist** 5 acid	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

Ooze

While squeezing, the cube moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.

Translucent

The cube is invisible until seen (Perception DC 25) or until it attacks. A creature that fails to notice the cube might walk into it, automatically being hit with *engulf*.

Standard Actions

Slam (acid) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d6 + 9 acid damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

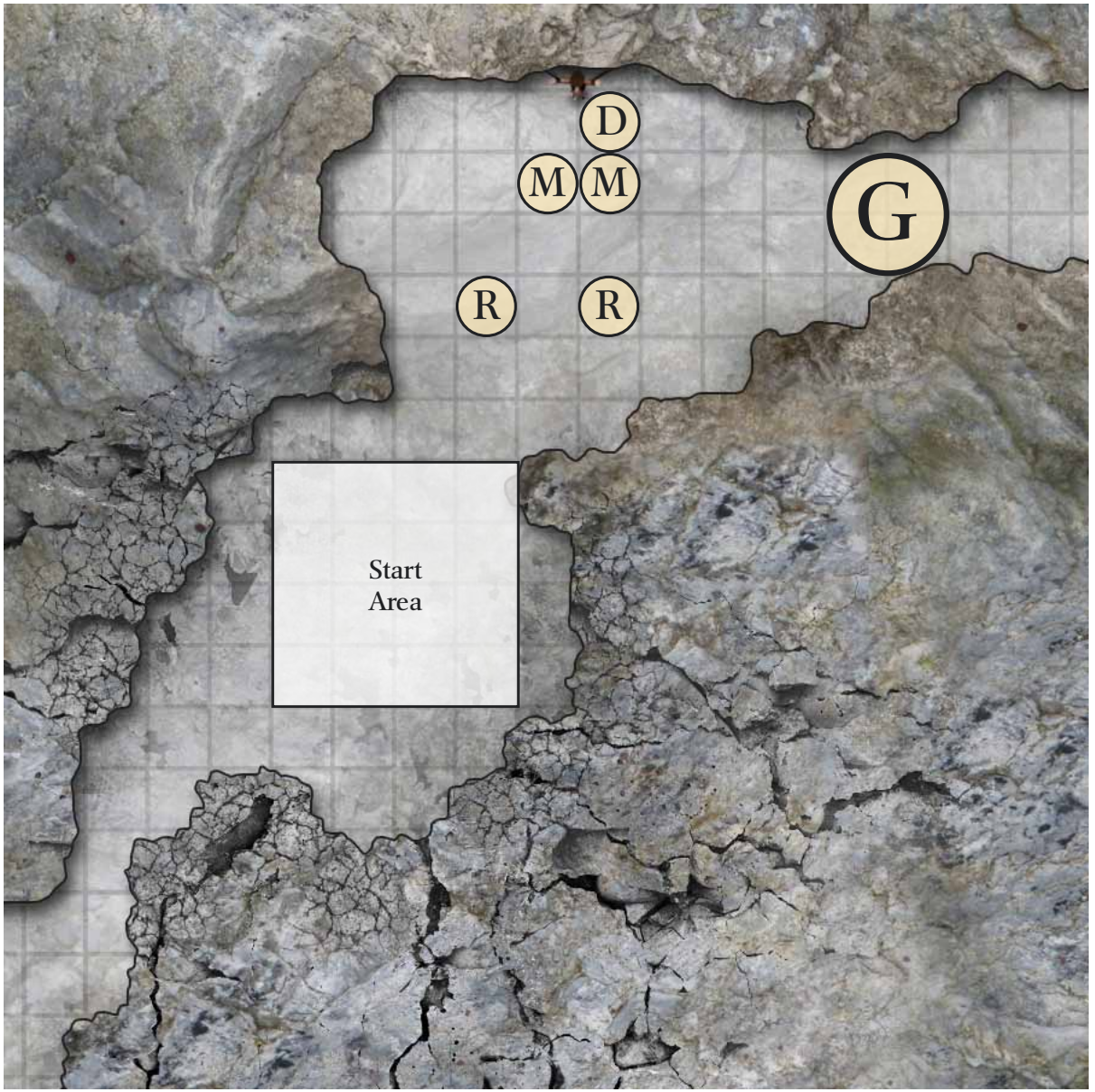
Engulf (acid) ✦ **At-Will**

Requirement: The cube must have no more than two creatures grabbed.

Attack: Melee 1 (one or two creatures); +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: The cube grabs the target (escape DC 15) and pulls the target into its space. Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 10 acid damage and is dazed. When the cube moves, it pulls with it any creature grabbed by it, and the creature remains grabbed and within the cube's space. This movement does not provoke an opportunity attack from the grabbed creature.

Str 14 (+4)	**Dex** 14 (+4)	**Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 18 (+6)	**Int** 1 (-3)	**Cha** 1 (-3)
Alignment unaligned	**Languages** –	



2 Gluttonous Rust Monsters (R)	Level 8 Brute
Medium natural beast	XP 350 each
HP 110; **Bloodied** 55	**Initiative** +7
AC 20, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 17	**Perception** +5
Speed 6	Low-light vision

Traits

Rusting Defense

Whenever an attack using a metal weapon hits the rust monster, the weapon used in the attack is rusting until the end of the encounter. While the weapon is rusting, attacks with the weapon take a -1 penalty to attack rolls. If the weapon used to attack the rust monster is already rusting, the penalty to attack rolls worsens by 1 (to a maximum penalty of -5).

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 3d10 + 3 damage. If the target is wearing heavy armor, the armor is rusting until the end of the encounter. While the armor is rusting, the target takes a -1 penalty to AC. If the target is wearing armor that is already rusting, increase the penalty to AC by 1 (to a maximum penalty of -5).

⸸ **Devour Metal** ✦ **Recharge** if the power misses

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature wearing or wielding a rusting item); +11 vs. Reflex

Hit: The rusting item is destroyed. If the item was magic, *residuum* worth the item's market value can be retrieved from the rust monster after the creature is slain.

⸸ **Gluttonous Bite** ✦ **Encounter**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 4d10 + 8 damage. If the target is wearing heavy armor, the armor is rusting until the end of the encounter. While the armor is rusting, the target takes a -1 penalty to AC. If the target is wearing armor that is already rusting, the penalty to AC worsens by 1 (to a maximum penalty of -5). In addition, any weapon the target is wielding is rusting until the end of the encounter. While the weapon is rusting, attacks with the weapon take a -1 penalty to attack rolls. If the weapon is already rusting, the penalty to attack rolls worsens by 1 (to a maximum penalty of -5).

Miss: Half damage.

Str 16 (+7)	**Dex** 16 (+7)	**Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 20 (+9)	**Int** 2 (+0)	**Cha** 11 (+4)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

At the start of the first round of combat, the adventurers hear a loud rumbling: the beginning of a cave-in. On the second round, the entrance tunnel fills with rubble. On the third round, rubble spills out into the cavern, pushing anyone in it into the far chamber. (The rubble-strewn area is difficult terrain.)

Any creature that tries to escape back through the entrance tunnel on the first round gets caught in the falling rock, taking 2d10 + 5 damage. The creature is immobilized and takes ongoing 10 damage until it escapes. The creature can make a saving throw to avoid the collapse, taking half damage on a save. A trapped creature can try to escape once per round, and escaping requires a DC 23 Athletics check.

After the cave-in ends, returning through the entrance passage is no longer possible. The only exit is the tunnel at the far side of the cavern.

Tactics: The elemental evil mudborn are under orders to stop enemies from reaching Dyson. They stay near him, launching their *mud ball* attacks at anyone who tries to approach. The gluttonous rust monsters were imprisoned within the mudborn, where they starved nearly to death. They home in on the character with the most metal to devour.

The gelatinous cube was prodded into place to prevent an early exit. It spends the first round moving into better position to engulf prey. It avoids the mudborn (which have no flesh to devour) but does not hesitate to overrun a rust monster while trying to get to a character.

Dyson (D): The old man has been tortured and will die in a few rounds if he is not tended to. Anyone adjacent to him can make a DC 15 Heal check to stabilize him. Using a healing power on Dyson automatically stabilize him. Otherwise, he makes a death saving throw at the end of each round and dies after three failures. Even if stabilized, Dyson barely clings to life and is unconscious for the remainder of the adventure. Rescuing Dyson fulfills a minor quest.

QUEST: CAVERN RESCUE
7th-Level Minor Quest (300 XP)
Returning Dyson to town alive earns the characters the quest reward.

Event 2: Tunnels of Terror

Skill Challenge Encounter Level 7 (600 XP)

Kodan knows he can't stand up to the adventurers at full strength. His goal is to weaken them as much as possible, perhaps eliminating one or two of them if he's lucky. To that end, with the aid of Barulg's construction and forging, and traps designed by Slik, he has laid out the tunnels to harry and weaken the party. Kodan still needs a few adventurers to escape, however, so he can finish them off in view of those he's trying to impress.

After a short time exploring, the party comes to a spot where the tunnel forks. Both directions are blocked by heavy stone slabs, each connected by a chain to a pulley in the opposite tunnel. Each slab requires at least two characters to raise it by pulling on its chain, and it falls back as soon as the chain is released or fewer than two characters hold it. (The chain is long enough to allow those holding it to move past the open slab if it is opened by the other chain.) Unless the adventurers come up with a way around this obstacle, they will have no choice but to split into two groups, each passing simultaneously into the opposing tunnels. After passing these obstacles, the groups are reunited at the exit chamber.

Each group must deal with two of the obstacles laid out by the Talons, represented by short skill challenges that affect the final encounter. Tailor these challenges to the group's abilities, choosing two from those described below , in whichever order you want. These challenges use a variety of skills, so they shouldn't be too difficult for the characters to overcome. If the players come up with a way to avoid

splitting the party, they should easily bypass this challenge and emerge stronger than Kodan expects.

Barulg's Infernal Forge

The tunnel walls transition into intricately carved works of metal and obsidian, engraved with devilish visages. Barulg, through his infernal masters, has infused his craftsmanship with primal fears of the living: the dark, being lost, and fire. The fiendish images swallow all light in the area (including any magical light sources) and launch blasts of invisible fire.

Level: 7 (300 XP)
Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).
Time Frame: Each character can make a skill check in this challenge once per minute.
Primary Skills: Dungeoneering, History, Perception. *Special*: After any character makes a skill check, regardless of the skill used and the success or failure of the check, a random character takes 2d6 + 4 fire damage.

Dungeoneering (DC 16): The character relies on familiarity with construction to advance carefully.

History (DC 16): The character recognizes the art on the walls as duergar handiwork, allowing him or her to figure out the best places to step based on their patterns.

Perception (DC 23): Despite the lack of light, the character uses other senses to find the path.

Secondary Skills: Perception, Insight.

Perception (DC 11): The character tries to anticipate the fire blasts. No success is gained, but he or she takes no damage from the next blast of fire that targets that character.

Insight (DC 11): The character uses intuition to warn the others about an oncoming blast of fire. No success is gained, but each other character takes only half damage from the next fire blast that attacks him or her.

Success: The party reaches the end of the hall, and their light sources flare to life again.

Failure: The adventures emerge with infernal darkness clinging to their souls. The group gains the Marked by Barulg trait: Any character who scores a hit against Barulg in the final encounter takes 5 fire damage.

Linn's Paranoid Gauntlet

The rocky walls change to a mirror-like substance, reflecting thousands of things both real and false. Images, voices, and sounds appear all around the characters, who become increasingly unsure if the other party members are real or have been replaced by something sinister. The adventurers must shake these feelings to emerge safely from the maze of mirrors.

Level: 7 (300 XP)
Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).
Time Frame: Each character can make a skill check in this challenge once per round.
Primary Skills: Arcana, Diplomacy, Insight. *Special*: Each round, any character who has not succeeded at a primary skill check takes 2d6 + 4 psychic damage.

Arcana (DC 23): The character uses his or her magical senses to get a fix on what is real and what is magically created.

Diplomacy (DC 16): The character gives a stirring speech to convince the others of his or her identity and trustworthiness.

Insight (DC 16): The character trusts his or her intuition to tune out the false voices and images.

Secondary Skills: Bluff, Intimidate.

Bluff (DC 11): The character employs verbal gymnastics to confuse the various illusions, although his or her own reality is still in doubt. No success is gained, but each other character receives a +2 bonus to the next primary skill check he or she makes this round.

Intimidate (DC 16): The character forcefully asserts his or her existence. Although this tactic is effective, the other party members grow more distrustful of each other. No success is gained, but this character gains a +2 bonus to all primary skill checks during the challenge. All other characters take a –2 penalty to their next primary skill checks.

Success: The bond between the adventurers helps to dispel the illusions and feelings of paranoia, leaving only a mild sense of doubt.

Failure: The adventurers can't shake their suspicions about what they experience. The group gains the Marked by Linn trait: Any character who scores a hit against Linn in the final encounter cannot regain hit points until the end of his or her next turn.

Primpel's Muddy Tomb

This section of tunnel is filled with slowly shifting mud, which seems to exude an otherworldly essence.

Level: 7 (300 XP)
Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).
Time Frame: Each character can make a skill check in this challenge once per minute.
Primary Skills: Endurance, Nature, Religion. *Special*: Each character must earn at least 1 success

with a primary skill in order to proceed, even if the group has achieved 4 successes.

Endurance (DC 23): The character uses brute force, pushing through while holding his or her breath.

Nature (DC 16): By drawing upon his or her experience in swampy terrain, the character is able to find solid footing amid the deeper mud.

Religion (DC 16): The character discerns that the earth and water bear traces of elemental energy tainted by evil. Calling on divine powers that oppose elemental evil causes the mud to part around the character.

Secondary Skills: Athletics, Religion.

Athletics (DC 11): No success is gained, but the character swims or wades through while dragging another character along, granting a +2 bonus to the next primary skill check made by another character. The character making this secondary skill check takes a –2 penalty to the next primary skill check he or she makes.

Religion (DC 11): The character meditates on a blessing to help another character ward off elemental evil. No success is gained, but the other character gains a +2 bonus to the next primary skill check. The character making this secondary skill check cannot make primary Religion checks for the rest of the challenge.

Success: The party struggles through the tunnels and emerges from the mud.

Failure: The adventurers make it to the other side, but the evil instilled in the mud seeps into their bodies. The group gains the Marked by Primpel trait: Any character who scores a hit against Primpel in the final encounter is weakened until the end of his or her next turn.

Slik's Mechanical Nightmare

Slik the kobold has outfitted these halls with as many traps as he could think of, and he wasn't subtle. Blades on pendulums, pit traps, falling stone blocks, and poison dart shooters line this stretch of tunnel.

Level: 7 (300 XP)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Time Frame: Each character can make a skill check in this challenge once per minute. *Special*: After a character makes any skill check, the traps attack that character. *Attack (Melee 1):* +12 vs. AC. *Hit:* 2d8 + 6 damage.

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Dungeoneering, Thievery.

Acrobatics (DC 16): The character dodges, slides, and weaves past the deadly traps.

Dungeoneering (DC 16): These traps are old hat to seasoned adventurers, and the character relies on his or her experience to bypass them.

Thievery (DC 23): The character temporarily sabotages one or more parts of the elaborate trap system, allowing passage.

Secondary Skills: Athletics, Perception.

Athletics (DC 11): The character temporarily forces the machinery to a halt, facing an attack to give the others a greater chance of success. No success is gained, but all other characters gain a +2 bonus to any primary skill checks this round. This character is automatically hit by the traps this round.

Perception (DC 11): The character observes a pattern to the traps' activation. No succes is gained, but all characters gain a +2 bonus to AC against the traps' attack this turn.

Success: Through a combination of teamwork, timing, and tenacity, the party escapes the trapped tunnel.

Failure: The traps have introduced Slik's custom poison into the adventurers' blood. The group gains the Marked by Slik trait: Each of the adventurers takes a –2 penalty to all defenses against Slik's attacks and has vulnerable 5 to Slik's damage.

Event 3: Valley Sentries

Combat Encounter Level 6 (1,200 XP)

The two tunnels eventually converge, allowing the adventurers to reassemble near the exit (if they were split). Just outside, they hear occasional sounds of bickering in Deep Speech. One more force waits to harass them as they emerge, in a further effort to weaken the party before the final confrontation. The sentries also give Kodan plenty of time to get ready for his crowning moment.

Light: If the adventurers arrive during the day, the area is brightly lit. At night, torches from the valley below shed dim light over the area.

Monsters: 1 ambush drake (A), 8 duergar thugs (D), 1 elemental evil mudborn (M), 1 ogre mercenary (O).

The adventurers can take a short rest before proceeding out of the cave. If they are carrying Dyson, they have time to lay him down in a safe spot. The monsters ignore the old man; besides not being a threat, he's not on the list.

When the heroes advance to the outside, read:

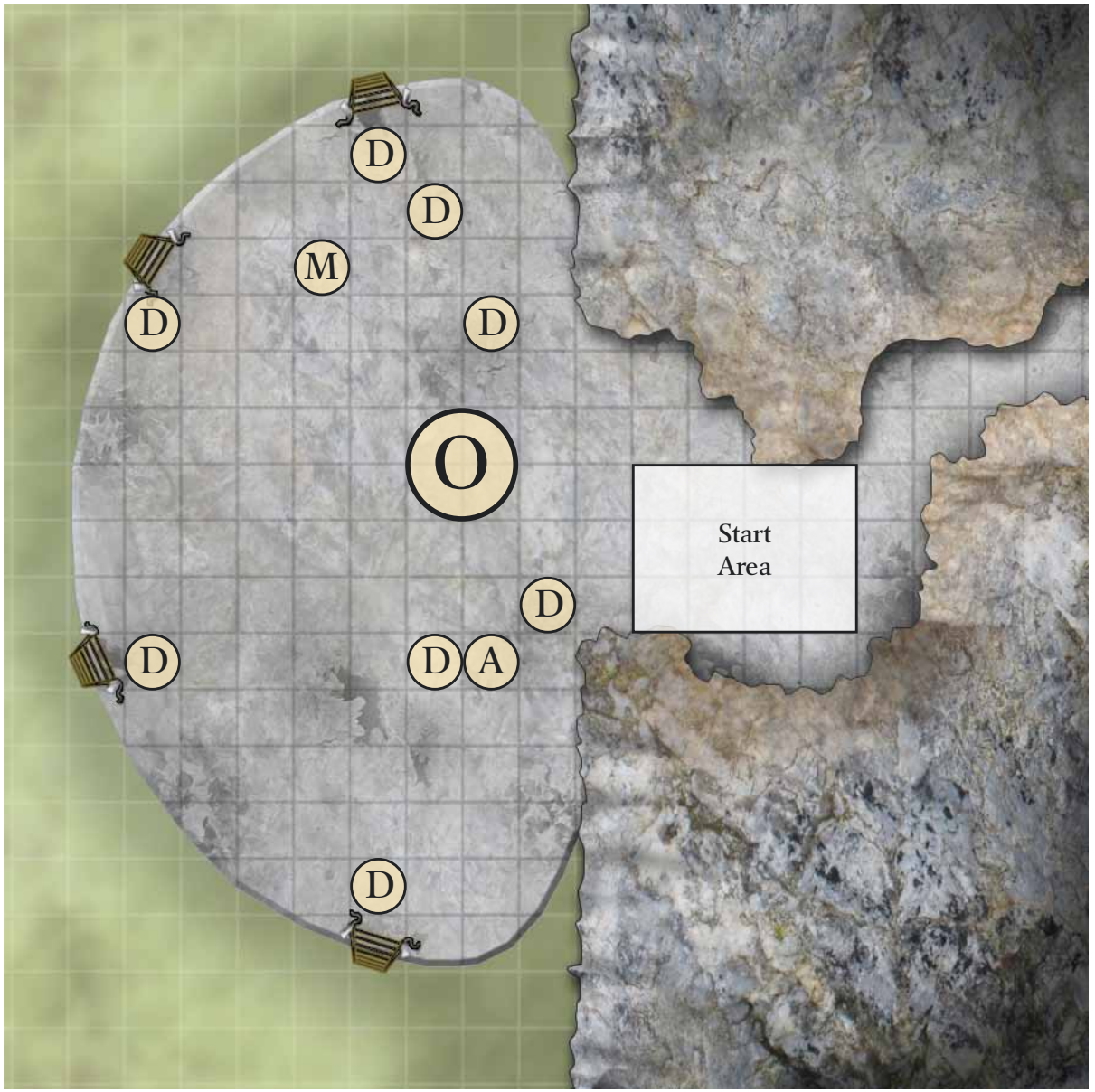
A chill air sweeps across you as you make your way out of the tunnel, high on the slope of a rocky outcropping somewhere inside the Chaos Scar. You have seen much of the Scar in your time here, but you've never had quite this view of it. From here, it looks almost serene.

You don't have much time to admire the view, though, for a sizable group awaits your arrival with obvious hostility. An ogre brandishing a massive morningstar dominates the scene, supported by a number of duergar. Two of the dark dwarves are holding the reins to a snapping drake, which they release when you emerge. A single mud creature quivers in place.

The ogre grins and hefts its weapon: "The boss wants 'em softened up. I call the big one."

Ambush Drake (A)	**Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium natural beast (reptile)	XP 250
HP 71; **Bloodied** 35	**Initiative** +7
AC 20, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16	**Perception** +3
Speed 6, fly 4 (clumsy)	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claws** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 7 damage.	
⸸ **Shifting Strike** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 7 damage.	
Effect: The drake can shift 1 square before or after the attack.	
Minor Actions	
Ravenous ✦ **At-Will**	
Requirement: The drake must be bloodied.	
Effect: The drake shifts up to 2 squares to a square closer to a bloodied enemy.	
Skills Stealth +10	
Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 11 (+3)	
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 3 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

8 Duergar Thugs (D)	**Level 4 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf	XP 44 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +4
AC 16, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14	**Perception** +4
Speed 5	Darkvision
Resist 5 fire, 5 poison	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Warhammer** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 8 damage.	
Minor Actions	
⤯ **Infernal Quills** (poison) ✦ **Encounter**	
Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 6 damage, and ongoing 2 poison damage (save ends).	
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+4)	
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+1)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven	
Equipment: chainmail, warhammer	



Elemental Evil Mudborn (M) **Level 6 Controller**
Medium elemental magical beast (aquatic, earth, water)
XP 250 each

HP 70; **Bloodied** 35 **Initiative** +7
AC 20, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 16 **Perception** +6
Speed 5, swim 8 Low-light vision
Immune disease, poison

Traits

Aquatic
The mudborn can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against any nonaquatic creatures.

Standard Actions

Slippery Slam ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage, and the mudborn can slide the target 1 square.

Mud Ball ✦ At-Will
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). If the target is already slowed, it is instead immobilized (save ends).

Torrent of Mud ✦ Encounter
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target falls prone.
Miss: Half damage.

Triggered Actions

Stick in the Mud ✦ Recharge if the power misses
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the mudborn hits it with a melee attack.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (triggering enemy); +9 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target is grabbed (escape DC 15). Until the grab ends, the target cannot make attacks, and the mudborn gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against it.

Skills Dungeoneering +11, Nature +11
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 9 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+4)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Primordial

Ogre Mercenary (O) **Level 8 Soldier**
Large natural humanoid (giant) XP 350

HP 93; **Bloodied** 46 **Initiative** +8
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 19 **Perception** +6
Speed 8

Standard Actions

Morningstar (weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage.
Effect: The ogre marks the target until the end of the ogre's next turn.

Handaxe (weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 7 damage.

Brutal Sweep (weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Close blast 2 (creatures in the blast); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 7 damage, and the target falls prone.

Str 22 (+10) **Dex** 15 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+6)
Con 21 (+9) **Int** 7 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+3)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment: 2 handaxes, morningstar

The combat takes place on a rocky outcropping 50 feet above the valley. The jutting stone partially blocks the view of what lies below.

Anyone can peer over the edge and see that a small crowd of creatures of all sorts is gathering near the bottom of the cliff. The shape of the outcropping blocks the view of what they're surrounding, which isn't revealed until the adventurers descend farther.

Rope Ladders: These are secured by metal spikes to the cliff edge in four spots and extend to the valley floor. If a creature is pushed off the edge beside a ladder and fails the saving throw to avoid falling, it can attempt a DC 16 Acrobatics check to grab onto the ladder instead. Creatures on the ladder gain partial cover from attackers on the cliff edge. If an adventurer descends more than 10 feet, he or she might be within range of some attacks from the monsters below—but they aren't willing to start the fight until the party is on the ground.

An adventurer might be knocked over the edge during the combat. If he or she survives the fall, that character gets an early glimpse of the gathering below. Kodan does not immediately attack but barks, "Get back up there. We're not ready for you yet." If the adventurer chooses not to return to the outcropping, the Talons attack with overwhelming superiority of numbers.

Tactics: On the first round, two duergar thugs descend about 10 feet on rope ladders to signal the crowd below that the party has arrived. On the next round, they climb back up and move to join the fight.

All of the sentries have been ordered not to kill any of the adventurers. With the exception of the ambush drake, the monsters do not attack anyone who appears to be unconscious. Once the adventurers outnumber the sentries, the survivors fight only until bloodied, then attempt to flee down the rope ladders. Those who get to the bottom join the crowd in the final encounter.

The ogre mercenary targets whoever looks the toughest in the party, preferring to attack bigger creatures and defenders in heavy armor.

Event 4: Rumble in the Valley

Encounter Level 10 (2,350 XP)

The final battle for the Chaos Scar is here. Rope ladders lead to the valley, where representatives of the Chaos Scar's inhabitants will witness the culmination of Kodan's plan.

The party can take another short rest before venturing down. During that time a chant starts, at first low and growing progressively louder. At first, the words are inaudible and in a variety of rumbling monstrous speech. Gradually, the chant falls into unison, repeating "Talons" in Common over and over until the adventurers descend to the battlefield.

Light: If the adventurers arrive during the day, the area is brightly lit. At night, torches illuminate the scene with bright light.

Monsters: Kodan, hobgoblin conqueror (K); Barulg, duergar/devil (B); Linn, doppelganger infiltrator (L); Primpel, bullywug priest of Elemental Evil (P); Slik, kobold trapsmith (S); the crowd (C).

The only way to get down safely is on the ladders, each of which can hold the weight of two characters at a time. The adventurers will have to choose which ones to use, and in which order to descend, which dictates where they arrive in the valley.

As they begin to descend, the chanting stops. Kodan takes this opportunity to rile up the spectators before the final battle. **Read:**

You make your way carefully down the rope ladders. After descending about 10 feet, you can more clearly see what's waiting for you. A hobgoblin stands on a short cliff above the crowd of monsters and addresses you.

"The time of your oppression has come to an end. You have terrorized the denizens of the Chaos Scar long enough. We are the Talons, and we are here to see that justice is finally done."

There is a short cheer at the mention of the Talons, then the hobgoblin continues. "Each of us have been wronged. Whether you've killed our kind, our family, our livelihood, or even ourselves, the time has come for you to pay the price for your crimes against us." He gestures to present a bullywug dressed in robes, a shapechanger whose visage flickers from the face of Dyson to that of each of you, a kobold tinkering with a metal device, and a duergar whose eyes flicker with infernal flames.

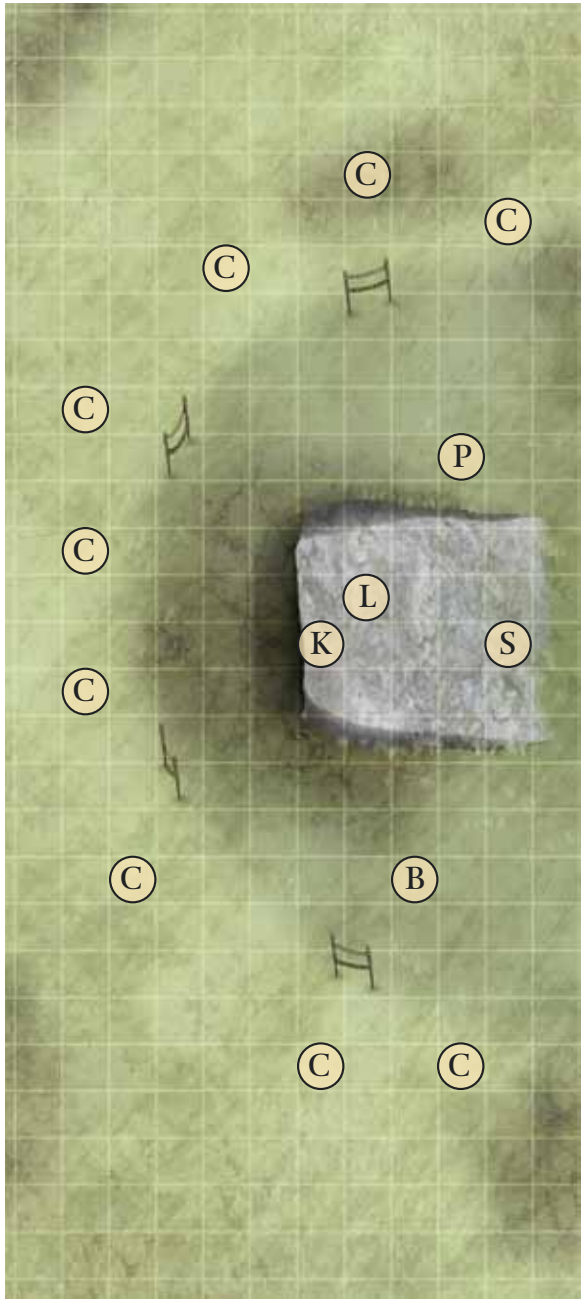
"These representatives have come to witness your doom. Once you are defeated, I shall lead a united Chaos Scar against your precious keep."

The first of you reaches the bottom of the ladder. The five Talons tense up. "Enough introductions. Now for the main event."

CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE

If a group failed one or more of the skill challenges presented in Event 2 (Tunnels of Terror), its members are affected by a magical disadvantage that hinders their effectiveness during the final confrontation. These effects are summarized below.

Challenge	Disadvantage
Primpel's Muddy Tomb	Marked by Primpel: Any character who scores a hit against Primpel is weakened until the end of his or her next turn.
Linn's Paranoid Gauntlet	Marked by Linn: Any character who scores a hit against Linn cannot regain hit points until the end of his or her next turn.
Barulg's Infernal Forge	Marked by Barulg: Any character who scores a hit against Barulg takes 5 fire damage.
Slik's Mechanical Nightmare	Marked by Slik: Each character takes -2 penalty to all defenses against Slik's attacks and has vulnerable 5 to Slik's damage.



Kodan, Hobgoblin Conqueror (K) **Level 8 Elite Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 700

HP 174; **Bloodied** 87 **Initiative** +8
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20 **Perception** +6
Speed 5 Low-light vision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Lead from the Front
When Kodan hits an enemy with a melee attack, his allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls against that enemy until end of Kodan's next turn.

Standard Actions

Spear (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage.
Effect: Kodan marks the target until the end of his next turn.

Spear Spin ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Kodan uses *spear* twice. If he hits the same target with both attacks, the target is slowed (save ends).

Roar of the Crowd (weapon) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 5 damage, plus 1 damage for each ally within 5 squares of Kodan.
Miss: Half damage.

Minor Actions

Tactical Deployment ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Effect: Close burst 5 (allies in the burst). Each target can shift up to 3 squares.

Triggered Actions

Redeploy ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to Kodan and marked by him shifts away from him.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Kodan charges an enemy other than the triggering enemy.

Skills Athletics +15, Diplomacy +13, History +12, Intimidate +13
Str 22 (+10) **Dex** 13 (+5) **Wis** 15 (+6)
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 17 (+7) **Cha** 18 (+8)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, spear

Barulg the Returned (B) **Level 7 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, duergar XP 300

HP 87; **Bloodied** 43 **Initiative** +4
AC 21, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19 **Perception** +8
Speed 5 Darkvision
Immune illusion; **Resist** 5 fire, 5 poison

Standard Actions

Warhammer (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage.

Choking Fumes (poison) ✦ **Recharge** ⁞⁞
Attack: Close burst 3 (creatures in the burst); +10 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + 3 poison damage, and the target is blinded until the end of Barulg's next turn.

Wave of Despair (psychic) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +10 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is dazed and slowed (save ends both).

Minor Actions

Infernal Quills (poison) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends both).

Triggered Actions

The Hammer Falls ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An attack bloodies Barulg or hits him while he is bloodied.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage, and Barulg pushes the target up to 3 squares and knocks it prone.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Barulg gains 25 temporary hit points. Until the end of the encounter, his *warhammer* deals 5 extra damage.

Skills Dungeoneering +8, Arcana +8, Religion +8
Str 17 (+6) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 10 (+3)
Con 23 (+9) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+4)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven
Equipment warhammer

Linn, Doppelganger Assassin (L) **Level 8 Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger) XP 350

HP 69; **Bloodied** 34 **Initiative** +13
AC 22, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21 **Perception** +10
Speed 6

Traits

Combat Advantage
Linn deals 2d6 extra damage against any creature granting combat advantage to her.

Standard Actions

Dagger (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.

Cloud Mind (charm) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Close burst 5 (one enemy in the burst); +11 vs. Will
Hit: Linn is invisible to the target until she attacks or is hit by an attack.

Minor Actions

Change Shape (illusion, polymorph) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Linn alters her physical form to appear as a Medium humanoid and changes the appearance of her clothing and gear until she uses *change shape* again or until she drops to 0 hit points. To assume a specific individual's form, Linn must have seen that individual. Other creatures can make a DC 29 Insight check to discern that the form is a disguise.

Shapeshifter Feint ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target grants combat advantage to Linn until the end of Linn's next turn.

Skills Bluff +13, Insight +10, Stealth +14
Str 12 (+5) **Dex** 21 (+9) **Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 19 (+8)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment dagger

Primpel, Bullywug Priest of Elemental Evil (P) **Level 6 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 250

HP 73; **Bloodied** 36 **Initiative** +6
AC 20, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 20 **Perception** +12
Speed 6 (swamp walk), swim 4

Traits

☼ **Rancid Air** (poison) ✦ **Aura** 2
Each enemy that spends a healing surge in the aura is weakened until the end of its next turn.

Aquatic
Primpel can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, he gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against any nonaquatic creatures.

Nature's Release (healing)
Any attacker who scores a critical hit against Primpel regains 5 hit points.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Quarterstaff** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage.

↗ **Bolt of Caustic Mud** (acid) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +11 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + 3 acid damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of Primpel's next turn. If the target is already immobilized, it takes ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).

✧ **Earth-Sundering Croak** (poison, thunder) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in the blast); +9 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d10 + 6 poison and thunder damage.

Skills Arcana +9, Nature +12, Religion +9
Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 18 (+7)
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 13 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+4)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Primordial
Equipment quarterstaff

Slik, Kobold Trapsmith (S) **Level 6 Controller**
Small natural humanoid (reptile) XP 250

HP 70; **Bloodied** 35 **Initiative** +7
AC 20, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 17 **Perception** +6
Speed 6 Darkvision

Traits

Trap Sense
Slik gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Buzzing Sword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 7 damage, and Slik can push the target 1 square.

↗ **Sling** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 7 damage.

↗ **Trick Shot** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚀ ⚁ ⚂
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 2 damage, and Slik chooses one of the following effects:
Flame Shot (fire): The target takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
Slick Shot: Slik slides the target up to 4 squares.
Glue Shot: The target is immobilized (save ends).

✧ **Contraptions Unleashed** ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Area burst 2 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 3 damage, and the target cannot make opportunity attacks and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both). Until the effect ends, Slik can slide the target up to 4 squares at the start of its turn.
Miss: Half damage.

Minor Actions

Shifty ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Slik shifts 1 square.

Triggered Actions

↯ **Watch Your Step** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy moves adjacent to Slik.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (triggering enemy); +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10 + 4 fire damage, and Slik can push the target 1 square.

Skills Dungeoneering +11, Stealth +12, Thievery +12
Str 13 (+4) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 13 (+4) **Cha** 13 (+4)
Alignment evil **Languages** Draconic
Equipment leather armor, sling, short sword, trapmaking kit

The battle continues until only one group survives. Kodan has staked everything on this showdown, and the other Talons fight on no matter what. Showing weakness in the Chaos Scar is just as bad as losing.

Ledge: Kodan and his cronies stand on this square chunk of stone, which rises to a height of about 10 feet at its westernmost edge.

Rope Ladders: These are secured by metal spikes to the cliff edge in four spots and extend to the valley floor. A creature can attempt a DC 16 Athletics check to climb to a higher position.

The Crowd: This diverse group of Chaos Scar inhabitants can be represented by any monster tokens or miniatures at hand. The creatures are not there to fight but to observe, so they don't join in the combat. However, any adventurer who gets to close to a crowd member draws a reflexive attack.

The Crowd (C) **Level 6 Hazard**
Special XP 250

Detect Automatic **Initiative** –

Triggered Actions

↯ **Attack** ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy moves adjacent to a creature in the crowd.
Attack (Opportunity Action): Melee 1 (the triggering enemy); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 7 damage.

Countermeasures

✦ **Attack:** A character can take a standard action to use an attack power against one or more creatures in the crowd. On a hit, that creature is removed from the crowd.
✦ **Disable:** A character can make a DC 16 check using an appropriate skill (such as Bluff or Intimidate) to remove one creature from the crowd.

Tactics: Kodan directs the action, but he also wants to make sure he gets the credit for killing the adventurers. He focuses on bloodied enemies when possible. Linn is fanatically loyal to Kodan and does her best to protect him, seeking combat advantage whenever she can.

Primpel is not afraid to get mixed up in the fight but tries to stay around the periphery and catch as many enemies as possible with his *earth-sundering croak*. If Kodan dies or is otherwise incapacitated, Primpel attempts to take command of the Talons.

Barulg wants only to prove his power, and he fights to the death.

Slik uses his traps to stay as far away as possible from combat. He uses *trick shot* and *contraptions unleashed* to move enemies into melee with the other Talons or into the crowd.

Conclusion

Defeating all the Talons ends the threat of a unified Chaos Scar and enhances the adventurers' reputation as heroes. When the last of the Talons is killed, the rest of the crowd quickly scatters to report to their groups that Kodan's plan failed.

If Kodan is killed and his body left unattended, some of the watching monsters spirit it away on the following round. Remove half the remaining creatures in the crowd, and if anyone asks, tell the party that there is no sign of the hobgoblin. (His absence is obvious at the end of the fight.) However, Kodan might return some day to exact revenge.

The adventurers return to the keep, either with a living Dyson (who will eventually recover) or bringing word of his fate. In either case, they receive a reward of 1,800 gp, but only returning Dyson alive satisfies the minor quest. If Kodan's body wasn't recovered, the adventurers might have to keep an eye out for another scheme from the hobgoblin or his followers.

About the Author

Dave Chalker is a freelance game designer and Editor-in-Chief of the award-winning blog Critical-Hits.com. His recent work includes co-writing the "Choose Your Fortunes Wisely" article for the D&D website, designing for the "Dragon Brigade Roleplaying Game" from Margaret Weis Productions, and creating the boardgame "Get Bit!" from Mayday Games.

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Eye on Eberron

Lost: The Shapeshifting Village

By Keith Baker

Illustration by Adam Paquette

"The Misplaced Village" is a classic Brelish folktale that has retained its appeal for hundreds of years. The story opens in a town plagued by bandits and war. Into this troubled place wanders a sympathetic traveler, who offers to hide the community from its enemies. Beleaguered and desperate to survive, the villagers embrace his offer.

As the stranger weaves a mighty spell, one of the farmers remembers an ancient proverb: "Beware the gifts of the Traveler." He tries to stop the ritual, but he is too late. The Traveler is as good as his word: From that day to this, no enemy has found the village—nor has anyone else.

The name of the village is lost to time, and most people refer to it simply as "Lost." According to the story, every misplaced thing is drawn to this mysterious destination; hence, when a child's toy goes missing, a Brelish mother might say, "At least it's bringing joy to Lost."

"The Misplaced Village" is a widely known tale in Breland, but only during the last decade has the truth behind the legend come to light.

The Envoi to the Crag

The first time the Daughters of Sora Kell summoned their warlords to the Great Crag, the eyes of the East were upon them. The Shadow Houses of Thuranni and Phiarlan, the Dark Lanterns of Breland, the Royal Eyes of Aundair, and the Trust of Zilargo all wished to know what forces were scheming in the kingdom of monsters. These groups' spies watched as the giant Gorodan Ashlord took a knee before the Daughters. They took note as the medusa queen swore her oaths. Gargoyles, werewolves, minotaurs, and more came forward—frightening forces, yet all well-known to the Citadel. And then the final warlord approached the triple throne. For a moment he

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CHANGELING OR DOPPELGANGER?

The terms *changeling* and *doppelganger* are different words for the same creature. The people of the Five Nations generally use "doppelganger" to refer to a predatory shapeshifter; "changeling" is a friendlier term.

Within this article, the inhabitants of Lost are referred to as doppelgangers, while their counterparts in the Five Nations are called changelings.

was a tiefling, then a hobgoblin, then an elf. Finally he stood revealed as a pale doppelganger, and he pledged the loyalty of Lost.

Many of the monsters of Droaam, such as harpies and ogres, cannot operate well in the Five Nations due to their monstrous appearances. The same is untrue for a force of doppelgangers. The powers of the East were eager to know what sort of threat Lost posed, so they dispatched spies into the wilds of the west. Neither Shadow nor Lantern could find the city, however, and scrying and divination revealed nothing. Trackers lost their prey or disappeared entirely.

And so it remains. Few people outside of Breland have heard of Lost. A successful DC 20 History check means that a character recalls that Breland has a tale of a lost or disappearing village, possibly involving a mysterious figure. Anyone born in Breland knows the tale of the misplaced village and its counterpart in Droaam; beyond that, there is only a decade's worth of speculation. Some say that the people of Lost are master thieves responsible for unsolved crimes throughout history. Others believe that agents of Lost are hiding among the changelings of the Five Nations and spying for Droaam.

Changelings are intrigued by the thought of a village of their own kind. They know that there is no reason to expect to be welcomed by a community of doppelgangers, who aren't bound by any sort of racial unity; nevertheless, some set out each year in search of the hidden sanctuary.

The Traveler's Chosen

The priests of Lost say that their ancestors came to Khorvaire from across the sea, fleeing slavery in Ohr Kaluun and the Sundering of Sarlona. During this time of upheaval, the Traveler visited them in the form of one of their own. With a word, he turned the trees into houses; with a gesture, he hid the village from prying eyes. He taught his people to speak in silence, to hear the thoughts of others, and to master their shapeshifting gifts in ways they'd never imagined. In exchange, the people of Lost swore to bring confusion to his enemies and change to the world.

Whereas the Cabinet of Faces specializes in intrigue, the doppelgangers of Lost are exceptional thieves, and many fine things now reside in Lost's *vaults of holding*. In keeping with the doctrine of the Traveler, the doppelgangers often share their ill-gotten gains with others. They have revealed the secrets of dragonmarked houses to rivals in other houses; stolen royal treasures and placed them in the hands of would-be usurpers; freed prisoners and exposed fugitives. On one hand, their actions have

THE GIFTS OF THE TRAVELER

While biologically similar to the changelings of the East, the doppelgangers of Lost possess abilities derived from their intense training, the traditions of Ohr Kaluun, and their devotion to the Traveler.

Telepathy: The doppelgangers of Lost are natural telepaths, possessing telepathy 10 in addition to other languages. Most of the people of Lost prefer telepathy to speech; in a society where the physical body is transient, a friend's mental voice is a comforting constant. A player who wants this ability for a changeling character can mimic it with the Wild Talent feat and *project thoughts* power from the *Dark Sun® Campaign Setting*.

Lost has a dedicated core of mental adepts whose telepathic abilities rival those of the kalashtar. These adepts possess psion powers and can perform appropriate rituals, such as Sending and Scrying, without using a ritual book, although these actions still take time and special focusing items.

Shapeshifting: The body adepts of Lost study the art of shapeshifting. Some shapeshifters transform their bodies into living weapons and mimic powers akin to a monk's. Others form a bond with the natural world and assume the forms of plants and animals; in these shapes, they mirror the beast form powers possessed by druids.

Boons and Treasures: In addition to the treasures that they have stolen over the centuries, the doppelgangers of Lost possess their own unique tools. They specialize in mutable materials, similar to facades (see page 3) or mimics, that respond to telepathic contact. These materials enable them to create *dynamic weapons*, *imposter's armor*, and *cloaked weapons* that assume innocuous forms, and other varieties of shifting gear. They are also masters of counter-divination, and possess unique items and rituals that help them evade divination magic.

brought about chaos and death; on the other, they have also inspired positive change and innovation.

Culturally, the doppelgangers of Lost are different from their kin in the East. For a child of Lost, face and name are a form of artistic expression. They find joy in change, both within the individual and the ripples they create in the lives of others. Although each doppelganger has a unique thought-symbol that serves as a true name, the people of Lost are ambivalent regarding permanent identity in a way that that outsiders find disconcerting.

The inhabitants of Lost function under a loose social hierarchy centered around the priests of the Traveler. Although they are allied with Droaam and serve the Daughters of Sora Kell as spies and inquisitors, it is as a form of tribute ensuring that the Daughters leave them alone. Their first loyalty is to the Traveler, and they continue their work in his name.

A Clever Facade

The gifts of the doppelgangers help them hide in plain sight; the village of Lost is equally blessed, for its "buildings" are alive. Within moments, Lost can become a gnoll camp, a Vadalis magebreeding outpost, a grove of greatpines, or any number of other forms.

The creatures that form Lost are called facades. A facade can transform its exterior appearance to resemble any sort of stationary object, from a stone outcropping or massive tree to a small house. It takes 1d4 + 3 rounds to complete such a transformation. Facades are simple creatures and need to be given telepathic direction to assume complex forms.

Facades subsist through photosynthesis and by laying down roots through which they draw nutrients from the soil. If attacked, a facade will shift its skin to the texture of stone. The creatures can't fight enemies, but they are very durable and can shrug off most wounds. A facade has resist 10 to all damage and regenerates 5 hit points per round as long as it is conscious. A typical facade has 400 hit points.

While rooted, a facade is incapable of movement. It takes 4 rounds for it to pull up its roots, after which it moves slowly by sliding along the ground like a slug. When the people of Lost wish to move long distances, they telepathically guide the facades to take the forms of wagons so that they can travel more swiftly.

Facades are naturally immune to any form of scrying, and this protection extends to any creature or object within the creature. If a wizard standing next to a facade scries on his current location, he will see nothing of interest.

What Brings You To Lost?

Lost is a legend. What might bring adventurers there? What makes it a compelling part of an adventure?

For Breland: Commander Vron of the Dark Lanterns wishes to make contact with the leaders of Lost to determine if he can forge an alliance between the Citadel and the doppelgangers. Can the adventurers succeed where the Citadel Elite have failed?

Cold Case: An overlord is stirring in Thrane, and the adventurers need the *Tears of Tira*—a relic of the Silver Flame—to lay it to rest. There's just one problem: The relic was stolen in the wake of the Silver Crusade. Stories say shifter raiders destroyed the shrine and stole it. Can the party discover the truth and track the relic to the vaults of Lost?

Chance Encounter: While traveling across Droaam, the adventurers encounter a marvelous carnival that is actually Lost in disguise. Adventurers who choose to play the potentially lethal games can earn real treasures, but the prizes sometimes pack unexpected consequences. When they acquire the scepter of the last Dhakaani emperor, the party becomes the target of a dozen goblin clans. How will they resolve the situation?

Getting There Is Half the Fun

Finding Lost is a difficult task. Divination is no help and, thanks to the facades, an adventurer could walk right through the village and never know it. The settlement is frequently on the move, so even traveling doppelgangers don't know the precise way back; they wander in the general region until scouts in the forms of birds or telepathic observers notice them and send directions. How do the adventurers succeed where the King's Citadel has failed?

- Strike a bargain with an inhabitant of Lost. As long as the doppelganger brings them willingly, the village might reveal itself; if he is clearly a hostage, it will stay hidden.
- Adventurers are remarkable people. An artificer could develop a tracking ritual that bypasses the wards of Lost. A Tharashk heir and Cannith heir working together might find a way to amplify the Mark of Finding. A changeling rogue could impersonate an inhabitant of Lost, deceiving the master tricksters.
- If the adventurers are searching for an artifact hidden in Lost, perhaps the artifact's power is such that it cannot be concealed even by the facades. The characters cannot track the village, but they can use divination to find the relic.

Aureon's Justice: The actions of the Traveler aren't always evil, but they are a source of chaos. Now that Lost is actively tied to Droaam, the Traveler's servants have caught the eye of the Sovereign Host. Divine characters aligned with the Host might be charged to find Lost and give its leaders a chance to atone for their actions. If Lost's leaders refuse, the adventurers must find a way to bring down the priests of the Traveler.

Lords of Dust: A Lord of Dust and his lesser rakshasa servants infiltrate Lost and replace the council of priests; the doppelgangers become unwitting tools of this new master. Adventurers might search for Lost to destroy the Lord of Dust and the doppelgangers alike, or they might aid a fugitive doppelganger who asks them to help drive the evil from the hidden village.

Changeling Destiny: A changeling character is approached by a doppelganger and told that his destiny lies in Lost. If he can find the hidden village, he will receive divine boons or grandmaster training and be set on the path that leads to his epic destiny. But one should always beware the gifts of the Traveler. . . .

Profit: The adventurers hear tales of the impressive and numerous treasures stolen by the doppelgangers. Although the shapeshifters have redistributed many of these items over the years, Lost remains a trove worthy of plunder—if the party can find it and claim the stolen goods.

About the Author

Keith Baker is an award-winning game designer and novelist best known for his work on the *Eberron® Campaign Setting* and the card game *Gloom*. His most recent novel is *The Fading Dream*, the third in the Thorn of Breland series. Follow Keith on Twitter as @HellcowKeith.

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Monster Manual Update:

Kuo-Toa

By Logan Bonner

Illustrations by Jason Felix and Daren Bader

In the seas and lakes of the Underdark, these fish-people worship their alien gods. Madness infects the race, and entire colonies can regress to gibbering animals.

Other races of the Underdark know to take the long way around when they negotiate the underground lakes and seas of that realm. To do otherwise is to invite the maniacal wrath of the kuo-toas. The creatures' strength and ingenuity make them formidable, and their fanaticism and insanity make them unpredictable. Kuo-toas rarely travel by themselves, unless they've gone mad and have been abandoned by their kin. In the words of a common dungeoneer's adage, "The only thing more dangerous than a kuo-toa hunting band is a kuo-toa alone."

Two characteristics define kuo-toas, their religion and their madness. The first brings them great pride, the second great shame. They entreat their unknowable gods to end their race's curse, but trafficking with creatures from beyond is just as likely to cause madness as to cure it.

Worship of Powers Beyond: Kuo-toas practice religion devoutly, but not in the name of a deity of the Astral Sea, an archdevil, or a demon lord. They instead follow creatures from beyond the world, beings of great knowledge and inscrutable motivations. The kuo-toas believe that these gods lurk in the murky depths of bottomless oceans in the Underdark, and these worshipers are likely to attack anyone who intrudes in such a sacred place.

Kuo-toas' rites resemble those of some cults of the surface world. Only the priests (called whips) speak for the deep gods, but all kuo-toas believe in them. They do not scrutinize the edicts of their gods but merely follow any dictates they can understand. The kuo-toas view aboleths as their gods' servitors in the physical realm, and some—especially those on the verge of madness—become willing thralls of the deep masters and guard their lairs.

Cursed by Madness: Like a disease, insanity infects the kuo-toa race. The whips and their servitors practice mental disciplines that usually prevent madness from taking hold, but any members of the common populace can fall prey to delusion and rage. Plagues of madness have repeatedly brought the kuo-toas to the brink of destruction. Smaller colonies have died out in such epidemics, and large colonies have been devastated. If a settlement falls to madness, all its works and treasures are buried. The new settlement built atop it cuts all ties with the old in a futile attempt at preventing the cause of the madness from returning.

Whips Hold Power: Priests live at the top of kuo-toa society. They act as oracles of the deep gods and master spells uniquely suited to the dank corridors of the Underdark. Just below the whips in social rank

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"I had figured out how to counter the goggler's adhesive shield: I shot my crossbow from afar. Then the thing charged out from cover, screaming and slobbering. Its flesh had turned deep red! Thank Bane I had the quickness to fire a shot that went right between its bulging eyes and slew it before it reached me."

—Blackguard Fionne

are the monitors, monks that serve as their agents. Monitors are used to control insane kuo-toas, and they work to prevent any outbreak of madness from spreading.

Captives for Slavery and Sacrifice: Kuo-toas attack when their territory is invaded, when they need supplies, or when they think their gods have ordered them to make war. They claim more than treasure when they plunder, taking healthy people to serve as slaves or to be sacrificed (along with beasts) to the deep gods.

Each kuo-toa community maintains an altar at least large enough to hold a human body, and older settlements have built up multitiered ziggurats for their bloody ceremonies. A sacrifice to the deep gods is a grisly affair. A whip guts the victim like a fish, then uses its entrails in a ritual of augury. The true sacrifice, though, is the victim's mind, which kuo-toas believe is devoured by the deep gods during the ritual.

Crafters of Specialized Gear: The unique equipment of kuo-toas, created to hunt the beasts of the Underdark and later adapted to capture humanoids, makes them tricky opponents. The most iconic is the sticky shield, coated with an adhesive that can snag a weapon and allow the shield bearer to pull it free from its wielder. Harpoons, originally used to catch giant garfish of the deep, have been adapted for use in combat outside the water. Whips carry special staffs with ends shaped like lobster claws that can snap shut and grab enemies.

Sundered Cities and Shrines: The kuo-toas once inhabited the oceans of the surface world, including the shores and islands. Over time, due in part to their inherited madness, they were driven downward by the people of the surface, while the predators of the oceans slaughtered the colonies there. Eventually, only kuo-toas that sequestered themselves in the Underdark found a way to adapt. Where once great towns of kuo-toas sprawled in coastal areas of the world, rudimentary dwellings and shrines remain, built into the damp tunnels and shallow pools that lead belowground. The only large settlements that remain are enormous temples that served as hubs and meeting places for smaller colonies.

Kuo-Toa Guard	**Level 16 Minion Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)	XP 350
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +13
AC 30, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 27	**Perception** +12
Speed 6, swim 6	Darkvision
Traits	
Aquatic	
The kuo-toa can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Spear** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC	
Hit: 12 damage.	
Move Actions	
Slick Maneuver ✦ **At-Will**	
Requirement: The kuo-toa must be adjacent to an enemy.	
Effect: The kuo-toa shifts up to 3 squares to another square adjacent to the enemy.	
Str 15 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+11)	**Wis** 9 (+7)
Con 15 (+10) **Int** 11 (+8)	**Cha** 13 (+9)
Alignment evil	**Languages** Deep Speech
Equipment leather armor, light shield, spear	

Kuo-Toa Marauder **Level 12 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 700

HP 119; **Bloodied** 59 **Initiative** +11
AC 26, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21 (25 while bloodied) **Perception** +11
Speed 6, swim 6 Darkvision

Traits

Aquatic
The kuo-toa can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Skewering Spear** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC (+19 while bloodied)
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Move Actions

Slick Maneuver ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The kuo-toa must be adjacent to an enemy.
Effect: The kuo-toa shifts up to 3 squares to another square adjacent to the enemy.

Minor Actions

Quick Step ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The kuo-toa must be bloodied.
Effect: The kuo-toa shifts 1 square.

Triggered Actions

⸸ **Sticky Shield** ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An adjacent enemy misses the kuo-toa with a melee weapon attack.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (the triggering enemy); +15 vs. Reflex
Hit: The weapon used for the triggering attack drops in the target's space.

Str 15 (+8) **Dex** 16 (+9) **Wis** 11 (+6)
Con 15 (+8) **Int** 11 (+6) **Cha** 13 (+7)

Alignment evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Equipment leather armor, slimy light shield, spear

Kuo-Toa Harpooner **Level 14 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 1,000

HP 137; **Bloodied** 68 **Initiative** +12
AC 30, **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 24 **Perception** +13
Speed 6, swim 6 Darkvision

Traits

Aquatic
The kuo-toa can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Harpoon** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 8 damage, and the kuo-toa grabs the target (escape DC 21). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 5 damage, and the kuo-toa can't make attacks using this harpoon.

➳ **Reeling Harpoon** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 8 damage, and the kuo-toa makes a secondary attack against the target.
Secondary Attack: +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage, and the kuo-toa pulls the target up to 3 squares.

Move Actions

Slick Maneuver ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The kuo-toa must be adjacent to an enemy.
Effect: The kuo-toa shifts up to 3 squares to another square adjacent to the enemy.

Triggered Actions

⸸ **Sticky Shield** ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An adjacent enemy misses the kuo-toa with a melee weapon attack.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (the triggering enemy); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: The weapon used for the triggering attack drops in the target's space.

Str 17 (+10) **Dex** 17 (+10) **Wis** 13 (+8)
Con 17 (+10) **Int** 13 (+8) **Cha** 15 (+9)

Alignment evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Equipment leather armor, slimy light shield, 4 harpoons

Kuo-Toa Monitor **Level 16 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 1,400

HP 153; **Bloodied** 76 **Initiative** +15
AC 30, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 26 **Perception** +15
Speed 6, swim 6 Darkvision

Traits

Aquatic
The kuo-toa can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Slam** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + 8 damage.

➴ **Crossbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 15 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 8 damage.

⸸ **Leap Kick** ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The kuo-toa monitor shifts up to 2 squares and uses *slam*.

⸸ **Lightning Fist** (lightning) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d10 + 8 lightning damage, and the target is stunned (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Move Actions

Slick Maneuver ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The kuo-toa must be adjacent to an enemy.
Effect: The kuo-toa shifts up to 3 squares to another square adjacent to the enemy.

Skills Acrobatics +18, Dungeoneering +15
Str 19 (+12) **Dex** 20 (+13) **Wis** 15 (+10)
Con 17 (+11) **Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 16 (+11)

Alignment evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Equipment leather armor, crossbow, 20 bolts

Kuo-Toa Whip **Level 16 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 1,400

HP 156; **Bloodied** 78 **Initiative** +12
AC 30, **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27 **Perception** +16
Speed 6, swim 6 Darkvision

Traits

Aquatic
The kuo-toa can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Pincer Staff** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +21 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 9 damage, and the kuo-toa grabs the target (escape DC 22) until the end of the kuo-toa's next turn. Until the grab ends, the kuo-toa can't make attacks with its pincer staff. The kuo-toa can end the grab as a minor action and slide the target up to 3 squares. The target must remain within 2 squares of the kuo-toa during this slide.
Sustain Standard: The grab persists until the end of the kuo-toa's next turn, and the target takes 2d8 + 9 damage.

Lightning Strike (lightning) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +19 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 3 lightning damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the kuo-toa's next turn.

Slime Vortex ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Area burst 2 within 20 (enemies in the burst); +19 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10 + 7 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends). The target falls prone, and the kuo-toa slides it up to 3 squares.
Miss: Half damage, and the kuo-toa can slide the target 1 square.

Move Actions

Slick Maneuver ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The kuo-toa must be adjacent to an enemy.
Effect: The kuo-toa shifts up to 3 squares to another square adjacent to the enemy.

Skills Dungeoneering +16, Religion +15
Str 17 (+11) **Dex** 18 (+12) **Wis** 17 (+11)
Con 20 (+13) **Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 18 (+12)
Alignment evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Equipment coat, pincer staff, headdress

About the Author

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Monster Manual Update: Sahuagin

By Logan Bonner

Illustrations by Christopher Burdett and Daren Bader

The sea devils raid settlements and attack ships, showing no mercy. The hateful creatures return to their undersea cities with their plunder: treasure to hoard and flesh to eat.

In the dark of the night, the sahuagin rise from the sea. Riding sharks and carrying tridents, they obey the commands of their barons to hunt and kill. Though their homes look like cities and their society is highly structured, their barbaric hunting practices leave no doubt that sahuagin are far from civilized. Their worldview is simple: Sahuagin are predators, and all other creatures are prey.

Strict Patriarchy: Sahuagin follow the orders of their superiors according to a rigid societal hierarchy. A male called a baron rules each village, a prince commands twenty villages, and a king might rule an entire coastline and live in a city six thousand strong.

If a sahuagin questions a leader or accuses one of cowardice or betrayal, the accuser must issue a formal challenge to be settled by unarmed combat. Winning a challenge doesn't guarantee a higher status for the victor, though. A warrior who defeats a prince has proven the validity of its challenge, but it is still just a warrior; a capable baron ascends to the former prince's station.

Female sahuagin don't rule but have a similar power structure in their roles as teachers and lore-keepers. Their elites become priestesses, adopting a title that means "favored one" in Abyssal. Just as a male can become a prince or a king, a female can ascend to the status of high priestess or royal priestess, titles equivalent in power to prince and king but directing matters of faith and culture instead of raids and hunting parties.

Devotees of Sekolah: The sahuagin follow one patron god: Sekolah, an exarch of Melora that appears in the form of an enormous great white shark. The mantras of Sekolah are simple: Kill and devour. Be that which eats, not that which is eaten.

The creation myth of the sahuagin claims that Sekolah brought the race into the world. In the early times, before the land had scarred the face of the water, Sekolah hunted. He tracked and killed a great behemoth of the deeps and, exulting in victory, sang a song that shook all the ocean. From a chasm below, echoes of his holy voice joined the song, and up rose his favored race. The sahuagin believe that Sekolah travels all oceans—from the Stormy Sea around Gloomwrought in the Shadowfell to the frozen sea of Stygia in the Nine Hells. Wherever prey can be found, killed, and eaten, Sekolah will be present. The priestesses teach that Sekolah is the enemy of the demon lords Demogorgon and Dagon. The sea devils

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await the day when their god hunts and kills these hated foes.

Swim with the Sharks: Sahuagin have few friends on land or in the water. Only sharks accompany them, serving as mounts or hunting hounds. Sahuagins see a strong resemblance to themselves in the shark's viciousness and tenacity. During a pitched battle in the water, when blood is spilled, sharks and sahuagin alike fly into a frenzy and become even more voracious.

Simple, Pragmatic Beliefs: The priestesses teach a small number of maxims that support and reinforce the natural instincts of sahuagin.

- Be self-sufficient.
- Obey the orders of your superiors and know your place.
- A successful endeavor is a virtuous one. If a raid brings back sufficient treasure and food, then it was right.
- Only the inadequate fail.
- Meat is meat. Sahuagin see no difference between animals and sentient enemies. They consume enemies or leave them to bleed out rather than taking captives. Cannibalism is not uncommon among the sea devils—the weak and injured might have had a higher purpose once, but now they serve best as food.
- Truth is what we remember. Sahuagin take each other's word as proof, rather than requiring a first-hand account of an event or physical evidence. The question is not "Did this happen?" but "Does a sahuagin say this happened?"

"I watched those devil men of the sea take my family away. They drowned them in the bay and dragged off the bodies, leaving me only a bleeding stump where my arm was torn away. As I passed out, I heard a keening, hissing noise—a victory song. All that murder and chaos had brought those devils joy!"

—Guardsman Klegg

Altered by Mutation: Genetic anomalies run rampant in the sahuagin population. The most desired mutation, an extra set of fully functional arms, marks a hatchling as a potential ruler. The sahuagin barons (and by extension their princes and kings) all have four arms, and they are much larger than the others of their kind. These nobles breed more frequently than males of lower castes, with the goal of strengthening the race by creating as many four-armed mutations as possible. Working against this effort is the fact that most of the nobles' offspring are weak or deficient in some way. These inferior hatchlings are fed to the stronger young.

About one of every hundred sahuagin hatchlings looks entirely different from the rest of its kind. These mutants, called malenti, appear less ferocious and alien to land-dwelling races, greatly resembling elves. Malenti are social pariahs within sahuagin society, but they serve an important purpose. The nobles send them out as ambassadors to make deals and treaties with coastal settlements. Such arrangements might be peaceful for a time but often end in betrayal, because the malenti's true mission was to scout out and sabotage defenses and otherwise set the settlement up for attack.

Superstitious of Magic: Displays of overt magic shock sahuagin, triggering a deep-seated superstition. The sea devils respect the natural forces of the world. The tides and tempests belong; fireballs, searing bolts, and psychic commands do not. The use of magic might frighten sahuagin warriors, but they are just as likely to become enraged and make the spellcaster their first target. The sahuagin make an exception only for the magic of their priestesses.

Villages on the Ocean Floor: Sahuagin live only in saltwater oceans; they loathe fresh water. Their marine settlements greatly resemble the ancient cities of the world. Sahuagin of higher social castes live in large, opulent dwellings decorated on the inside with shells, pearls, and coral. All buildings are domed and camouflaged by plants. Ships passing overhead, and creatures or vessels that can travel underwater, might pass by one of the smaller villages without detecting it.

Each settlement has an amphitheater near its center, where the sahuagin hold rallies before raids. Challenges settle disputes and matters of honor in sahuagin society, and the amphitheater also serves as an arena for these battles to the death. On the rare occasions when prisoners are taken alive, the sahuagin force them to fight in the amphitheater (using rituals or stolen magic items to grant them the ability to breathe water if necessary).

Sahuagin Guard **Level 6 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 63

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17 **Perception** +4
Speed 6, swim 6 Low-light vision

Traits

Aquatic
The sahuagin can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Scent Blood
Against bloodied enemies, the sahuagin gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and deals 2 extra damage.

Standard Actions

Trident (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage.

Thrown Trident (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage.

Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal
Equipment trident

Sahuagin Raider **Level 6 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 250

HP 70; **Bloodied** 35 **Initiative** +7
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +4
Speed 6, swim 6 Low-light vision

Traits

Aquatic
The sahuagin can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Blood Frenzy
Against bloodied enemies, the sahuagin gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls.

Standard Actions

Trident (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage, and the sahuagin marks the target until the end of the sahuagin's next turn.

Thrown Trident (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage.

Triggered Actions

Opportunistic Strike ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy flanked by the sahuagin shifts.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The sahuagin makes a melee basic attack against the triggering enemy.

Str 20 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal
Equipment trident

Sahuagin Priest	**Level 8 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)	XP 350
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35	**Initiative** +8
AC 22, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 21	**Perception** +9
Speed 6, swim 8	Low-light vision

Traits

Aquatic

The sahuagin can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Blood Frenzy

Against bloodied enemies, the sahuagin gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls.

Standard Actions

⨁ **Trident** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage.

⨁ **Thrown Trident** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +13 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage.

Water Bolt ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 10, or 20 underwater (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, or 3d8 + 7 damage underwater.

Spectral Jaws ✦ **Recharge** when a creature saves against this power

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +13 vs. Will

Hit: 4d6 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 damage and a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends both).

Miss: Half damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Skills Intimidate +12

Str 16 (+7)	**Dex** 18 (+8)	**Wis** 20 (+9)
Con 16 (+7)	**Int** 12 (+5)	**Cha** 16 (+7)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal

Equipment trident, holy symbol, kelp robe

Sahuagin Baron	**Level 10 Elite Brute (Leader)**
Large natural humanoid (aquatic)	XP 1,000
HP 256; **Bloodied** 128	**Initiative** +9
AC 22, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20	**Perception** +6
Speed 6, swim 8	Low-light vision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

☼ **Blood Healing** (healing) ✦ **Aura** 10

Any ally in the aura that starts its turn adjacent to a bloodied enemy regains 5 hit points.

Aquatic

The sahuagin can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Blood Hunger

Against bloodied enemies, the sahuagin gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +5 bonus to damage rolls.

Standard Actions

⨁ **Trident** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 3d10 + 6 damage.

⨁ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

⨁ **Thrown Trident** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 3d10 + 6 damage.

Baron's Fury ✦ **At-Will**

Effect: The sahuagin uses *trident* once and *claw* twice.

Skills Intimidate +13

Str 22 (+11)	**Dex** 18 (+9)	**Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 18 (+9)	**Int** 12 (+6)	**Cha** 16 (+8)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal

Equipment trident, headdress

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The Gauntlgrym Gambit

A D&D® adventure for characters of levels 3-5

By Daniel Marthaler

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Introduction

"The Gauntlgrym Gambit" begins in the coastal city of Neverwinter. Whispered rumors and fenced artifacts lead the heroes through the trackless wilderness in search of the legendary lost dwarven realm of Gauntlgrym, where they face not only the Ashmadai cultists who uncovered a portion of the city but also the monstrous denizens of its lightless expanse and the strange oozes that threaten to subsume it entirely.

This Dungeons & Dragons® adventure is designed for characters of levels 3-5. For more information on Gauntlgrym, the Ashmadai, and the Abolethic Sovereignty, see the *Neverwinter™ Campaign Setting*.

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Adventure Background

In ages past, the subterranean city of Gauntlgrym was the capital and crown jewel of the ancient Delzoun empire. Its cavernous halls, some large enough to contain entire surface villages, were carved with unerring precision, their ceilings soaring scores of feet overhead. Towering statues of dwarven gods and heroes stood vigil over chambers and lined thoroughfares, the least of which was wide enough to sail a ship along.

The mines produced endless tides of iron, silver, gold, and mithral, and booming trade brought goods and wealth from across Faerûn, but it was the Great Forge that was the burning heart and true treasure of the city. Deep beneath the settled layers, dwarven craftsmanship and elven magic bound the slumbering primordial Maegera, a godlike being of raging fire and unfettered destruction, and harnessed its unthinkable heat to power the Forge. There, on anvils of adamantine blessed by dwarf priests, items of power could be forged without the need for enchantments, their base material infused with a splinter of the primordial's essence. The unceasing wonders that flowed from these forges helped the dwarves to turn barren mines and caverns into one of the most magnificent cities Faerûn has ever known.

As glorious as Gauntlgrym was, nothing lasts forever. Relations between the great empires of the elves, dwarves, and humans grew sour as the centuries passed. So it was that when the numberless hordes of what became known as the Orc Marches smashed into the north, each empire stood alone. The war was devastating. Gauntlgrym was lost to the rampaging armies of the orcs, and the empire of Delzoun was shattered in the brutal fighting. Ultimately, the orcs were driven back, but at great cost. The once-mighty dwarven empire was left crippled, never to recover. It was humans, from nearby Illusk, who finally drove the remaining orcs from Gauntlgrym, but their hold on the city proved just as short-lived, for foul creatures from the Underdark soon swarmed from the depths to claim the city as their own.

Over the next thousand years, history turned to legend and mighty Gauntlgrym was all but forgotten by humans and elves and dwarves of the surface world. Illithids, duergar, drow, and aboleths now vie for control of the fallen city, its treasures, and the entombed primordial at its core.

Recently, in what amounts to little more than a feint in the larger struggle, a plague of creeping mold and toxic slime was released by the Abolethic Sovereignty upon a far-flung outpost of the city held by the duergar. Rather than expend valuable resources combating the infection directly from a strategically unimportant location, the duergar resolved to quarantine the affected area by blasting shut the passages leading back to the rest of Gauntlgrym.

Unknown to the duergar, the tremors caused by their ongoing demolitions opened the uppermost section of the outpost to a natural sinkhole that leads to the surface. Tales of the sudden appearance on the surface of native Underdark creatures, which were fleeing the encroaching oozes, filtered back to Neverwinter and caught the attention of the Ashmadai spy network. When the scouts that were dispatched returned with confirmation that not only were the stories true, but that an entrance to fabled Gauntlgrym had been uncovered, the Ashmadai assembled an expedition to claim the city for the glory of their infernal master.

Adventure Synopsis

As the adventure opens, the characters must sort through the rumors circulating on the streets to discover clues to the location of the Ashmadai expedition and, more important, the possible way into Gauntlgrym. Even with these clues, however, the path is far from clear. Finding the opening with only snippets of secondhand rumors to guide one through the monster-infested wilderness is a monumental effort. Many have searched for an entrance to the legendary city; none have succeeded, and few return at all.

Once the heroes reach the sinkhole, they must fight their way through the Ashmadai camp before descending into the depths on a swaying, multiple-platform lift. Midway through their descent, the characters are set upon by a swarm of stirges escaping the oozes below and a band of cultists willing to risk life and limb by leaping from platform to rickety platform to bring death to the enemies of Asmodeus a hundred feet above the floor.

A group of more erudite cultists and their bodyguards await characters who make it to the ground in one piece at their forward exploration site and defensive perimeter. Progress deeper into the city reveals what the Ashmadai were guarding against—a nest of monstrous spiders happy to supplement their diet with fresh meat. Beyond the web-choked passageways, and down yet another cliff, the adventurers stumble upon the remains of an ill-fortuned, and rather singed, duergar demolition team and the aggressive oozes they were attempting to contain.

The tunnels ahead are host to more oozes that slither their way through an inverted forest of grasping, hanging stands of mold. The heroes must cross a veritable sea of garishly colored, acidic ooze welling up from the depths, battling a massive black pudding across a bridge formed from a fallen dwarf statue of titanic proportions. As if footing made even more treacherous by slippery cave slime was not enough, a massive explosion set off by the duergar rocks the battlefield, dislodging great chunks of the chamber's ceiling.

The adventurers confront the duergar demolitionists at the newly collapsed end of the last passage leading into Gauntlgrym proper. After successfully

sealing off the rest of the city, the duergar have nothing more to do except dispense with the heroes and leave. The duergar's defeat does not reopen the tunnel, but earns the heroes a coded map that appears to lead to the city and further adventure.

Getting the Heroes Involved

Here are three ways the adventurers might become involved in the story.

A drunken trapper, in over his head and out of coin in a game of cards at a table near the characters, tosses a battered dwarf figurine the size of his meaty fist into the meager pot, proclaiming with great volume, if not clarity, that the statue is a "genuine Gaunty-grelm artifact" and that it should more than cover his bet. The piece is obviously dwarven in manufacture, though determining whether the damage is from the slow march of ages or a week in the drunkard's sack will require closer inspection.

Tales of fearsome monsters attacking people are all too common in Neverwinter, but the story being told in the next group over from the characters features the wrong monster. The young woman relating her tale of woe seems sincere enough at first glance, but the coal-black, flightless bird-creature she is describing sounds suspiciously like a dire corby, a beast said to be native to lost Gauntlgrym. What would one of those be doing wandering the forest?

Expeditions of dwarves searching the wilderness near Mount Hotenow for their lost city are not unusual, but a band of humans, some of whom are whispered to be devil worshipers, gearing up just like the dwarves do and heading toward the mountain, is. Though the humans have tried to keep their activities a secret, the rumor mill still turns, and news of the devil cultists reaches the characters' ears. It's up to the heroes to figure out what the Ashmadai are up to now.

Theme Tie-In

One of the new character themes presented in the *Neverwinter Campaign Setting* is the heir of Delzoun. An heir of Delzoun character who handles one of the authentic Gauntlgrym artifacts introduced in this adventure (either the one from the drunken trapper in the adventure hook or the one uncovered during the first skill challenge) can sense that he or she is holding a piece of the dwarves' ancestral home. This sensation does not provide any mechanical benefit, but rather an opportunity for that character to become personally invested in the adventure.

If there are no heirs of Delzoun among the heroes, another dwarf character might experience this feeling instead. This alternative would be most appropriate for a shield dwarf, but the line of Delzoun was scattered far and wide after the collapse of the dwarven empire, and any dwarf could carry enough Delzoun blood to feel the call.

Into the Lost City

Gauntlgrym has remained undiscovered for centuries. Its location is a secret that has claimed the lives of many who sought to uncover it. Even though the Ashmadai think they've found a way into the city's once-sacred halls, the path remains as treacherous as ever.

Event 1. Finding the Sinkhole

Skill Challenge Level 4 (875 XP)

Finding the sinkhole entrance to Gauntlgrym is no easy task.

There are no roads that lead to Gauntlgrym; only tales of terrible monsters and rumors of devil worshipers serve to guide you through the trackless, hostile wilderness in search of a destination that has remained lost for a thousand years.

Monsters prowl the darkened Neverwinter Wood, the slopes of Mount Hotenow, and the stony ridges of the Crags, more than ready to prey upon any creatures foolish enough to stumble into their domain. The trek itself might prove to be equally deadly, as the adventurers push themselves over dangerous terrain, testing their mental and physical limits.

Level: 4.

Complexity: 5 (requires 12 successes before 3 failures).

Time Frame: Each character can make a check in this challenge once per hour. If the party attempts to rest, denizens in the vicinity disturb their sojourn and prevent them from gaining any benefit.

Primary Skills: Athletics, Endurance, History, Nature, Perception, Stealth.

Athletics (DC 14): Rugged trails and sheer cliffs are as nothing to the character, and the clear paths and climbing lines she leaves behind ease the way for those who follow.

Endurance (DC 10; group check): The adventurers push through rough terrain without rest, risking exhaustion and injury in order to make good speed. Each character makes an Endurance check. The party gains one success if at least half the checks are successful.

History (DC 14): The character uses her familiarity with Gauntlgrym's history and legend to tease out possible landmarks mentioned in the ancient tales. A DC 21 check removes one failure from the party's total instead of awarding a success.

Nature (DC 14): The character navigates the wilderness, avoiding pitfalls others might have fallen into while homing in on likely locations for the sinkhole. A DC 21 check awards an additional success.

Perception (DC 14): The character spots trouble before it happens and detects the subtle outlines of

ancient landmarks beaten low by the march of centuries or covered with teeming vegetation. A DC 21 check awards an additional success.

Stealth (DC 10, group check): Avoiding unnecessary and fruitless encounters with the region's belligerent or hungrier inhabitants requires a light step and careful planning. Each character makes a Stealth check. The party gains one success if at least half the checks are successful.

Secondary Skills: Diplomacy, Heal, Insight, Intimidate.

Diplomacy (DC 14): Words of encouragement and support keep allies motivated over the grueling march and endless searching. Successes and failures do not count toward the skill challenge. Instead, a success grants one character a +2 bonus on her next skill check, while a failure imposes a –2 penalty on the next skill check made in the challenge.

Heal (DC 14): The character dispenses both preventative and curative treatments for the most common injuries sustained during extended marching, enabling their allies to keep up the pace without lasting harm. Successes and failures do not count toward the skill challenge. Instead, a success grants one character a +2 bonus on her next skill check, while a failure imposes a –2 penalty on the next skill check made in the challenge. A DC 21 check removes one failure from the party's total instead of granting a bonus, though this benefit can happen only once during the challenge.

Insight (DC 14): The strain of a prolonged trek wears on the nerves as well as the body, a fact the character is well equipped to notice and counter before it impacts the group as a whole. Successes and failures do not count toward the skill challenge. Instead, a success grants one character a +2 bonus on her next skill check, while a failure imposes a –2 penalty on the next skill check made in the challenge.

Intimidate (DC 14): Whether with shouted threats or pointed ribbing, the character pushes her allies to greater efforts. Successes and failures do not count toward the skill challenge. Instead, a success grants one character a +2 bonus on her next skill check, while a failure imposes a –2 penalty on the next skill check made in the challenge.

The Price of Failed Checks: Each time a character fails a skill check with a primary skill that does not involve a group check, each character in the party loses a healing surge as the heroes run afoul of hostile natives or become lost and must struggle over even rougher terrain to regain their bearings. Each character can lose up to three healing surges in this manner.

Success: The party manages to locate the Ashmadai camp. Proceed to Event 2.

Failure: The characters stumble upon the Ashmadai camp eventually, but their delay in discovering the site means that the camp is more heavily populated. Continue with Event 2, adding another three human goons to the encounter.

Treasure: None.

Event 2. Ashmadai Encampment

Combat Encounter Level 4 (960 XP)

The surface camp of the Ashmadai expedition blocks the only access to the city below.

Perception DC 14: The character notices that the tents are made from oilcloth, a waterproof but very flammable material.

Light: Bright light (daylight, or bonfire and lanterns).

Monsters: 2 branded zealots (Z), 10 human goons (G), 2 seared devils (D).

Start Area: The characters enter the encounter area along the western edge of the map directly opposite the sinkhole.

When everyone is ready to begin, read:

Canvas tents, interspersed with piles of supplies, form a makeshift camp ahead. A number of humans drift about the encampment, performing mundane tasks. Two robed figures appear to direct the workers' efforts, while a pair of what appear to be horribly burned humanoids stare sullenly into the fire, occasionally poking at an errant twig.

A yawning hole opens beyond the camp, its mouth straddled by geared mechanisms of some kind. Heavy chains dangle down into the opening, slowly clanking their way over the gears.

The Ashmadai are still setting up and organizing the site, and they drop what they are doing to attack anyone who approaches.

Oilcloth Tents: The tents are flimsy enough to push through while moving but substantial enough to count as difficult terrain both before and after they are collapsed. A creature taking refuge behind an erect tent has partial concealment from creatures on the other side. The oiled canvas the tents are made from is quite flammable, and a tent that takes fire damage or is in the area of a burst or blast that deals fire damage catches fire. A tent on fire burns until the end of the encounter. A creature that enters its square or starts its turn there takes 5 fire damage.

Bonfire: The fire is kept burning at all times to entertain the searing devils and keep them from setting any more workers on fire. The square is difficult terrain that deals 5 fire damage to a creature that enters it or starts its turn there.

Supply Crates: The heavy crates are difficult terrain and provide partial cover.

Lanterns: Crude oil lanterns, etched with the sign of Asmodeus, are kept lit around the camp at all hours. (The map depicts four lanterns, spaced roughly around the bonfire; you can create others if desired.) A creature can hurl a lantern as a standard action to make the following attack.

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex
Hit: Ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
Effect: Tents in a close burst 1 centered on the target's square catch fire.

Salvaged Lift: Closer inspection of the geared mechanisms reveals them to be a series of ore lifts that were scavenged from the city below. Several rickety platforms, a recent addition by the cultists, have been lashed to chains and are raised and lowered through the 200-foot-deep sinkhole by means of the enchanted gearing. Crude wooden scaffolds jut out to meet the platforms where they reach the surface. These platforms appear to be the only method of descending into the lost city. (This makeshift elevator takes the characters to Event 3 and, eventually, to the site of encounter G1.)

Sinkhole: A creature forced over the edge of the hole must succeed on a saving throw to fall prone in the nearest unoccupied square along the edge and end the forced movement. If the saving throw fails, the creature falls 30 feet to the nearest platform, taking damage as normal. A creature can climb the heavy chain with a DC 10 Athletics check.

Treasure: 50 gp, 2 *potions of healing*, and a cracked stone mug bearing the seal of Gauntlgrym (worth 250 gp).

Tactics: When combat is joined, the goons mob characters while staying close enough to their fellows to benefit from their *mob rule* ability. They toss conveniently located lanterns at the adventurers, but focus on clubbing the intruders down.

The branded zealots don't shy away from melee, as long as it's on their terms. They use *bow to your master* as soon as an enemy is in range and repeat that attack as often as possible.

The devils rush into combat with the nearest characters, then attempt to intercept characters that target or move directly against the zealots.

All the enemies fight to the death, expiring with Asmodeus's name on their lips.

Extra Goons: If the characters failed the skill challenge in Event 1, three more human goons are waiting for them at the campsite. You can represent these three with separate tokens, locating them where you see fit, or you can use them as reinforcements to take the place of the first three goons that go down.

2 Branded Zealots (Z) **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 175

HP 66; **Bloodied** 33 **Initiative** +4
AC 16, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +4
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⨺ **Branding Iron** (fire, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 8 fire damage.

⤙ **Hellfire Chain** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +7 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + 5 fire damage. The zealot pulls the target up to 2 squares, and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Bow to Your Master ✦ **Recharge** if neither attack hits
Effect: The zealot uses *hellfire chain*. If the target is then adjacent to the zealot, the zealot uses *branding iron* against it. If both attacks hit, the target falls prone.

Skills Intimidate +8, Stealth +9
Str 17 (+5) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+3)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment robes, mace

10 Human Goons (G) **Level 2 Minion Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 31 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +3
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 11 **Perception** +2
Speed 6

Traits

Mob Rule
While at least two other human goons are within 5 squares of the goon, it gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses.

Standard Actions

⨺ **Club** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 5 damage.

Str 14 (+3) **Dex** 11 (+1) **Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 13 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment club

2 Seared Devils (D) **Level 3 Soldier**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 150 each

HP 50; **Bloodied** 25 **Initiative** +5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14 **Perception** +3
Speed 5
Resist 10 fire

Standard Actions

⨺ **Ashen Slam** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the devil's next turn.

Triggered Actions

Choking Ashes (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: A creature marked by the devil uses an attack power that does not include the devil as a target.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The triggering creature takes 5 fire damage and is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Skills Stealth +8
Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 18 (+5) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+0)
Alignment evil **Languages** Supernal

Event 3. The Clanking Lift

Combat Encounter Level 5 (1,075 XP)

The elevator system installed by the Ashmadai is the fastest and safest way into the city below. At the start of this part of the adventure, only the two platforms on the north side of the map are visible and accessible to the characters.

When everyone is ready to continue, read:
Just as you start to examine the platforms and the chains they travel on, the mechanism creaks and begins to move. The platforms in front of you begin to descend slowly.

The characters can board the platforms with no risk of falling. (If the group has more than four members, they'll need to split up.) The ride down is uneventful until, about halfway through the 200-foot descent, the adventurers encounter a band of Ashmadai riding to the surface, and the noise of the resulting combat disturbs a small flock of stirges nesting in the shaft.

Perception DC 20: The character spots the nested stirges.

Light: Dim (running lights attached to the platforms).

Monsters: 3 hellfire warlocks (W), 1 human transmuter (T), 5 stirge suckerlings (S).

Start Area: Each character begins the encounter on one of the two platforms along the north side of the shaft.

The monotony of the slow ride down is shattered by a shout from below as a platform filled with cultists rises into view, and another one appears nearby. With a screech of chains against gears, all four platforms stop moving.

The human transmuter, riding up with three cronies, brought the elevator to a halt by pulling on a brake lever attached to their platform. The crazed devil worshipers are willing to fight to the death in this precarious arena; they will do anything to prevent the characters from reaching the bottom of the shaft in one piece.

The numbers on three of the platforms represent their elevation in feet relative to the unlabeled platform (so that the northeast platform is 10 feet higher than the northwest one, 15 feet higher than the one holding the cultists, and 20 feet higher than the unoccupied platform to the southwest). The platforms remain in these positions until the end of the encounter.

The stirges are hiding when the encounter begins. Place them only when they move to attack or are spotted by a character.

Platforms: The rickety platforms are stable enough to be used to move cargo, but were never intended as a combat arena. Leaping from or onto a platform follows the normal rules for jumping. A creature on a platform or hanging from the chain a platform is connected to can sever the iron chains and rope lashings that keep a platform attached to the large central chain as a standard action by making a DC 22 Thievery check or a DC 15 Strength check. Creatures on a platform that is disconnected in this way fall unless they succeed on a saving throw to grab hold of an adjacent chain, platform, or handy piece of wall.

The platforms (or chains, if the platforms were disabled) eventually deposit their riders at the bottom of the shaft, where encounter G1 occurs.

Chains: The chains that support the platforms can be climbed easily, requiring only a DC 10 Athletics check. Jumping from a chain poses no problem, but catching hold of one at the end of a jump requires a DC 15 Acrobatics check or Athletics check. On a failed check, the jumper falls.

Sinkhole Walls: The rough stone walls of the sinkhole are uneven and prone to crumbling, but can be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check. Purposefully leaping onto the wall requires a DC 15 Athletics check to avoid falling, but springing from the wall to another object is simple enough.

Falling: A creature that falls can make a saving throw to catch hold of the sinkhole wall or a length of chain after falling 20 feet. If that saving throw fails, the character gets another one at 50 feet. A creature that catches itself in this manner takes 1d10 or 2d10 damage.

A creature that fails these saving throws plunges 100 feet to the floor. Because the impact is somewhat cushioned by piled bags of flour and other soft goods, the creature takes only 5d10 damage.

Treasure: A common level 7 item (carried by the human transmuter).

Tactics: The warlocks open with *hellfire*, hoping to set someone aflame so that they can take the fight to the enemy by using *ride the fire*.

The transmuter blasts clumps of characters into the void, cursing and hexing whichever adventurer poses the greatest danger.

The stirges have tangled with the Ashmadai before and have little desire to repeat the experience. They avoid the cultists and any PC who uses fire powers.

Development

The characters can get the platforms moving again if one of them makes a DC 14 Perception check to identify the brake lever that controls the elevator. (Each platform has its own lever, which operates the entire mechanism.) Manipulating the brake causes the two northern platforms to continue descending while the two southern platforms head in the other direction.

In the time it takes to finish their descent, the characters receive the benefit of a short rest.

3 Hellfire Warlocks (W) **Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 175 each

HP 48; **Bloodied** 24 **Initiative** +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16 **Perception** +3
Speed 6

Traits

Hellfire Affinity
The warlock has a +2 bonus to all defenses against attacks made by creatures taking ongoing fire damage.

Standard Actions

Dagger (fire, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Hellfire (fire, implement) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6 + 4 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Concussive Inferno (fire, force, implement) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in the burst); +7 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + 2 fire and force damage, and the warlock pushes the target up to 2 squares and knocks it prone.
Miss: Half damage, and the warlock pushes the target up to 2 squares.

Move Actions

Ride the Fire (teleportation) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Effect: The warlock teleports, swapping positions with a creature within 10 squares of it that is taking ongoing fire damage.

Skills Intimidate +11, Stealth +10
Str 15 (+4) **Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 17 (+5) **Cha** 18 (+6)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment robes, dagger, rod

Human Transmuter (T) **Level 7 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid XP 300

HP 77; **Bloodied** 38 **Initiative** +3
AC 21, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20 **Perception** +11
Speed 6

Standard Actions

Staff (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.

Capricious Earth (charm, implement) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Area burst 2 within 5 (enemies in the burst); +10 vs. Will
Hit: 2d10 + 6 damage, and the transmuter slides the target up to 3 squares.
Miss: The transmuter can slide the target 1 square.

Beast Curse (implement, polymorph) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Ranged 5 (one hexed enemy); +10 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The transmuter alters the target's physical form to appear as a Tiny animal until the end of the transmuter's next turn. While in this form, the target cannot use powers or make attacks.

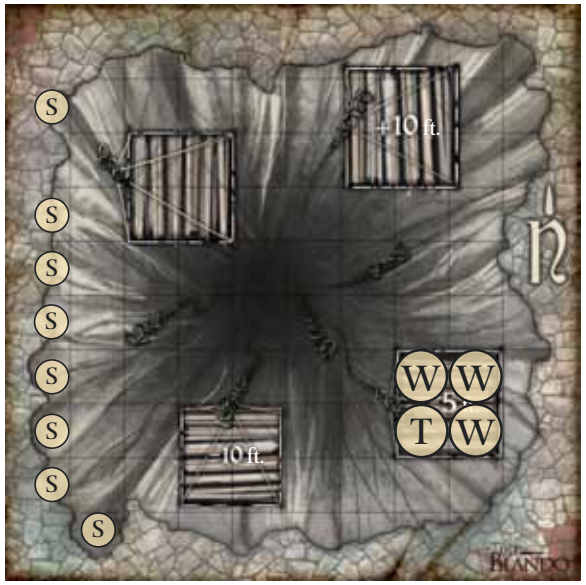
Move Actions

Hex Jump (teleportation) ✦ **Encounter**
Effect: Close burst 5 (one hexed creature in the burst). The transmuter and the target teleport, swapping positions.

Minor Actions

Hex (charm, implement) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Attack: Close burst 5 (one enemy in the burst); +10 vs. Will
Hit: The target is hexed until the end of the transmuter's next turn. While hexed, the target is slowed and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and damage rolls against the transmuter.

Skills Arcana +10, Nature +11
Str 10 (+3) **Dex** 11 (+3) **Wis** 17 (+6)
Con 13 (+4) **Int** 15 (+5) **Cha** 14 (+5)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment staff, robes



5 Stirge Suckerlings (S) **Level 5 Minion Lurker**
Small natural beast XP 50 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +9
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 15 **Perception** +7
Speed 2, fly 6 Darkvision

Traits

Nimble Bloodsucker
While the stirge has a creature grabbed, the stirge gains a +2 bonus to AC and Reflex.

Standard Actions

Bite ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC. While the stirge has a creature grabbed, it can use *bite* only against that creature, and it hits automatically.
Hit: 5 damage, and the stirge grabs the target (escape DC 15). Until the target is no longer grabbed by any suckerlings, it takes damage at the start of its turn equal to the number of stirge suckerlings grabbing it. The target takes this damage only once each turn, regardless of how many suckerlings are grabbing it.

Skills Stealth +10
Str 7 (+0) **Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 1 (-3) **Cha** 4 (-1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Gauntlgrym

The capital of the Delzoun dwarves was more than just a city; it was an entire subterranean realm. The ruined halls and crumbling tunnels the adventurers traipse through as they move from encounter to encounter are unparalleled masterpieces of the stonemason's art. DMs who take the time to play up the fallen splendor of the ancient city will help involve the players in the action.

G1. Forward Base

Combat Encounter Level 5 (1,175 XP)

The Ashmadai have pulled back to this defensible position after losing a great number of troops to the spiders and oozes deeper in the city.

Light: Bright light (torches).

Monsters: 1 vizier devil (V), 2 hellfire warlocks (W), 3 branded zealots (Z).

Start Area: The setup for this encounter assumes that any characters who didn't fall to the bottom of the shaft have ridden down to the site on the platforms. If the heroes use a different means of descent (such as climbing down the chains), adjust accordingly.

When the characters can see into the chamber, read:

The shaft from the surface opens into a large chamber, the far end of which has fallen away to leave the hall open to a black abyss. Two robed humans and a devilish figure wearing regal clothing appear to be examining and cataloguing the various fractured reliefs and damaged statues adorning the room. Three more cultists, seemingly of a more martial bent, keep watch near the edge of the precipice.

The branded zealots are on the lookout for spiders or oozes ascending the cliff face from the depths, but they remain vigilant enough to notice encroaching adventurers.

If a creature from Event 3 fell to the ground in this area, that sudden commotion alerts the Ashmadai that trouble is coming. They reposition themselves to have cover and cannot be surprised. A character who falls is quickly subdued (if conscious), restrained (escape DC 15) with climbing rope, and blindfolded, which makes the captive blinded until he or she escapes from the ropes. Place the captured character prone adjacent to one of the branded zealots when the combat starts. He or she benefits from a short rest but can spend no healing surges. The rest ends (restoring the character to 1 hit point) just as the encounter begins.

Stowed Gear: Enough food and gear to equip dozens of workers is scattered throughout the room. A number of climbing kits and lengths of rope are laid out near the edge of the drop.

Dwarven Statues: The statues scattered about the chamber depict heroes from Gauntlgrym's past glory and are solid enough to be blocking terrain. Several have fallen (creating difficult terrain), and the earthquakes that heralded Mount Hotenow's furious eruption and the more recent duergar blasting have weakened those that remain standing. A creature can topple a standing statue as a standard action by making a DC 15 Strength check, which results in the following attack being made from the statue's square.

Attack: Close blast 1 (creatures in the blast); +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d10 + 3 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Effect: The statue's square and the squares in the blast become difficult terrain.

Precipice: A creature forced over the edge of the cliff can make a saving throw to fall prone in the last safe square and end the forced movement. Otherwise, the creature falls 20 feet to a small ledge, taking damage as normal. Climbing up the cliff requires a DC 15 Athletics check, or a DC 10 check if a rope is lowered.

Treasure: A battered shield with a dwarven family tree picked out in silver (worth 250 gp), and a fist-sized marble statue of Moradin with gold detailing (worth 250 gp).

Tactics: The zealots charge into the fray, maneuvering to protect their allies, flank overeager enemies, and push statues over on clusters of heroes. Adventurers who get past them are likely to find themselves pulled back into combat by a timely *hellfire chain*.

The warlocks hang back and pelt the intruders with fire from the safety of cover. The vizier devil moves between ranged and melee combat, setting the adventurers against each other in between blasting them with hellfire and augmenting its allies' weapons with searing enchantments.

Development

Descending the 50-foot-high cliff face is the only way to continue exploration of the city. The abundant climbing gear ensures that the climb is simple and does not require a check when being accomplished outside combat. The descent leads to encounter G2.

Vizier Devil (V) **Level 7 Controller (Leader)**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 300

HP 80; **Bloodied** 40 **Initiative** +4
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 21 **Perception** +6
Speed 6, teleport 4 Darkvision
Resist 10 fire

Standard Actions

⨁ **Scepter** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage, and the devil slides the target 1 square.

Hellfire Bolt (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d10 + 2 fire damage, and the target grants combat advantage until the end of the devil's next turn.

Word of Command (charm) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Choose one creature within 2 squares of the devil. The devil slides that creature 3 squares, and the creature makes a melee basic attack as a free action against a creature of the devil's choice.

Minor Actions

Hellfire Enchantment (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: One ally within 5 squares of the devil deals 5 extra fire damage with melee attacks until the end of the ally's next turn.

Triggered Actions

Infernal Advice ✦ **Recharge** ⚅
Trigger: An ally within 10 squares of the devil misses with an attack roll or fails a skill check.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The triggering ally can reroll the attack roll or the skill check, gaining a +2 bonus to the reroll.

Skills Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Insight +11
Str 13 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 22 (+9) **Cha** 18 (+7)
Alignment evil **Languages** Supernal
Equipment scepter

2 Hellfire Warlocks (W) **Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 175 each

HP 48; **Bloodied** 24 **Initiative** +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16 **Perception** +3
Speed 6

Traits

Hellfire Affinity
The warlock has a +2 bonus to all defenses against attacks made by creatures taking ongoing fire damage.

Standard Actions

⨁ **Dagger** (fire, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Hellfire (fire, implement) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6 + 4 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Concussive Inferno (fire, force, implement) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in the burst); +7 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + 2 fire and force damage, and the warlock pushes the target up to 2 squares and knocks it prone.
Miss: Half damage, and the warlock pushes the target up to 2 squares.

Move Actions

Ride the Fire (teleportation) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅
Effect: The warlock teleports, swapping positions with a creature within 10 squares of it that is taking ongoing fire damage.

Skills Intimidate +11, Stealth +10
Str 15 (+4) **Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 17 (+5) **Cha** 18 (+6)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment robes, dagger, rod

3 Branded Zealots (Z) **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 175 each

HP 66; **Bloodied** 33 **Initiative** +4
AC 16, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +4
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⨁ **Branding Iron** (fire, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 8 fire damage.

Hellfire Chain (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +7 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + 5 fire damage. The zealot pulls the target up to 2 squares, and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Bow to Your Master ✦ **Recharge** if neither attack hits
Effect: The zealot uses *hellfire chain*. If the target is then adjacent to the zealot, the zealot uses *branding iron* against it. If both attacks hit, the target falls prone.

Skills Intimidate +8, Stealth +9
Str 17 (+5) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+3)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment robes, mace

G2. Eight Legged Freaks

Combat Encounter Level 5 (1,002 XP)

When Hotenow exploded, half of the large chamber in which encounter G1 takes place was swallowed by the earth, coming to rest partway down the newly formed chasm. Monstrous spiders, fleeing the encroaching oozes and following the delicious Ashmadai, now call it home.

Perception DC 22: A keen eyed character spots telltale movements in the thick webbing of the ceiling that reveal the presence of hidden spiderlings.

Light: None.

Monsters: 2 deathjump spiders (J), 1 doomspinner spider (D), 8 spiderlings (S).

Start Area: The characters begin the encounter along the bottom of the cliff face near the west edge of the map.

When the characters have all descended, read:

Thick sheets of sticky webbing envelop this chamber, almost obliterating the walls and ceiling. Other webs are anchored on ancient statues of dwarves or lie draped over the broken floor.

Glinting eyes twinkle in the shadows as monstrous shapes begin to stir in the gloom.

The spiders are hungry and have a lot of mouths to feed. They jump on the chance to score fresh meat that has considerately wandered into their larder.

The four spiderlings shown in the open area near where the characters begin are actually hidden in the thick cobwebs of the ceiling. Do not place them until they move to attack or are spotted by a character.

Cobweb Ceiling: The thick webbing provides the spiderlings in the ceiling with total concealment, but their tremorsense allows them to find targets through the webs without penalty. The cobwebs begin 15 feet above the floor.

Web Sheets: Squares filled with giant webs are lightly obscured and are difficult terrain. A creature that moves into a web must make a DC 15 Acrobatics check or Athletics check or become immobilized (escape DC 15). The webs do not hinder spiders.

Fire can be used to destroy webbing. A melee attack clears a single square, while blasts and bursts clear the squares in the area they affect.

Dwarven Statues: The statues scattered about the chamber depict heroes from Gauntlgrym's past glory and are solid enough to be blocking terrain. Several have fallen (creating difficult terrain), and the earthquakes that heralded Mount Hotenow's furious eruption and the more recent duergar blasting have weakened those that remain standing. A creature can topple a standing statue as a standard action by making a DC 15 Strength check, which results in the following attack being made from the statue's square.

Attack: Close blast 1 (creatures in the blast); +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d10 + 3 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Effect: The statue's square and the squares in the blast become difficult terrain.

Treasure: A common level 5 item (in webbing at the base of a statue).

Tactics: The spiderlings have no sense of tactics, swarming from hiding to bite whichever PC happens to be nearest to them at the time. The other spiders are aware of the spiderlings' debilitating toxin, and primarily attack targets that have been made susceptible to poison. Otherwise, the deathjump spiders live up to their moniker, leaping around the field to target poorly armored adventurers. The doomspinner hurls webs to slow down melee characters, but it is hard-pressed to resist an immobilized treat.

Development

Another drop yawns beyond this chamber, leading off to the east and south. Web coated climbing gear and secured ropes rest at its lip. The 40-foot descent leading to encounter G3 is easily managed without checks outside combat with the help of this gear. (The characters might already have climbing gear from the previous encounter.)

2 Deathjump Spiders (J) **Level 4 Skirmisher**
Medium natural beast (spider) XP 175 each

HP 52; **Bloodied** 26 **Initiative** +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +7
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb) Tremorsense 5
Resist 5 poison

Traits

Web Walk
The spider ignores difficult terrain composed of webs.

Standard Actions

Bite (poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Death from Above ✦ **Recharge** ⚅
Effect: The spider jumps up to 6 squares. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks. After the jump, the spider uses *bite*, knocking the target prone on a hit.

Move Actions

Prodigious Leap ✦ **Encounter**
Effect: The spider jumps up to 10 squares. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +8
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 1 (-3) **Cha** 8 (-1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

Doomspinner Spider (D) **Level 7 Controller**
Large natural beast (spider) XP 300

HP 82; **Bloodied** 41 **Initiative** +6
AC 21, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 19 **Perception** +11
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb) Tremorsense 10
Resist 5 poison

Traits

Web Walk
The spider ignores difficult terrain composed of webs.

Standard Actions

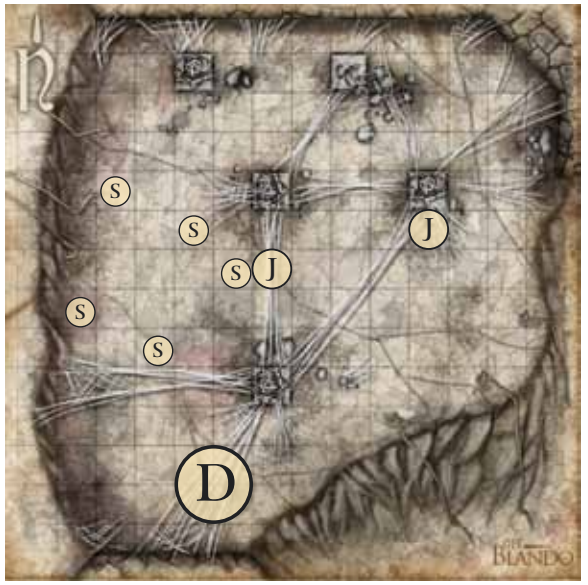
Bite (poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage, or ongoing 10 poison damage if the target is immobilized, restrained, stunned, or unconscious (save ends).

Web Casting ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Area burst 1 within 5 (creatures in the burst); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: The target is restrained (save ends).
Effect: Squares in the burst are difficult terrain until the end of the encounter.

Minor Actions

Draw to Doom ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +10 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The spider pulls the target up to 4 squares.

Skills Athletics +12, Stealth +11
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 17 (+6)
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 1 (-2) **Cha** 9 (-2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –



8 Spiderlings (S) **Level 4 Minion Skirmisher**
Small natural beast (spider) XP 44 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +6
AC 18, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +3
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb) Tremorsense 5

Standard Actions

Bite (poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 2 poison damage, and the target gains vulnerable 5 poison until the end of the spiderling's next turn. If the target already has vulnerability to poison damage, increase the vulnerability by 2.

Skills Acrobatics +9
Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 10 (+2) **Int** 4 (-1) **Cha** 7 (+0)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

G3. There's Always Room

Combat Encounter Level 4 (926 XP)

This section of the city, the uppermost level still intact, is being overrun by oozes welling up from below.

Perception DC 20: The character notices the lurking green slimes.

Perception DC 25: The character spots the almost invisible bulk of the gelatinous cube waiting at the bottom of the ropes.

Light: None.

Monsters: 1 gelatinous cube (C), 2 green slimes (S), 4 duergar thugs (T).

Start Area: The characters begin the encounter along the bottom of the cliff face near the north edge of the map.

When the characters near the end of their descent, read:

As you make your way down this slope, you see that though the walls are slick with cave slime and the floor is choked with rubble from the collapsing upper levels, the chamber below appears to be the most intact portion of the lost city yet.

Muffled grunts echo softly from an open passage not far from the cliff's base.

The oozes begin the encounter hidden, so place them only when they move to attack or are spotted by the adventurers. If the gelatinous cube is not spotted, the first character that moves into or climbs down into the squares it occupies is automatically attacked by the cube's *engulf* power.

Chasm Wall: Climbing along the cliff face during combat requires a DC 14 Athletics check, or a DC 10 check if one uses ropes.

Rubble: The large chunks of stonework provide partial cover and can be scaled with a DC 14 Athletics check. They are 2 squares high. The smaller debris is merely difficult terrain.

Cave Slime: Squares filled with this slippery goo (the areas with a bluish tint) are difficult terrain. Any creature except for an ooze that enters a square of cave slime must make a DC 14 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

Explosive Casks: These small barrels are filled with volatile alchemical explosives that the duergar use in their demolitions. (The map depicts five casks, loosely clustered in the west end of the area; you can create others if desired.) A creature can hurl a cask as a standard action to make the following attack.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 5 (creatures in the burst); +7 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d6 + 5 fire damage.

A character who succeeds on a DC 21 Arcana check to inspect an adjacent cask as a minor action realizes what they are and how they can be used without needing to have seen one in action. The DM should let characters know that they can attempt this check.

A cask can be targeted (hp 10; defenses 10; immune necrotic, poison, psychic, Will; vulnerable 10 fire) and explodes when reduced to 0 hit points, making the above attack in a close burst 1.

Collapsed Tunnels: A tunnel leading west from this area (near where the duergar begin) has been demolished and is impassable. A character who has training in Dungeoneering recognizes the destruction as deliberate and skillfully executed.

A smaller passage to the south appears to have collapsed of its own accord, but is equally impassable.

Treasure: An uncommon level 6 item (suspended in the gelatinous cube).

Tactics: The oozes wait until a character moves within striking range before abandoning stealth to use *engulf* on their prey. The oozes leave the duergar alone; the evil dwarves have used protective rituals to appear unappetizing to the slimes.

The duergar prefer to hang back and let the slimes take the brunt of the attack while they fire their spines and toss convenient cask, but they gang up on anyone who makes it past the oozes.

Development

The only way out of this area is to the east. That fact will become apparent to the characters as soon as

Gelatinous Cube (C)	**Level 5 Elite Brute**
Large natural beast (blind, ooze)	XP 400
HP 156; **Bloodied** 78	**Initiative** +4
AC 17, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	**Perception** +3
Speed 3, climb 3	Blind, blindsight 5
Immune blinded, gaze effects; **Resist** 5 acid	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Traits	
Ooze	
While squeezing, the ooze moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.	
Translucent	
The cube is invisible until seen (Perception DC 25) or until it attacks. A creature that fails to notice the cube might walk into it, automatically being hit with *engulf*.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Slam** (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 2d6 + 9 acid damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
⸸ **Engulf** (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Requirement: The cube must have no more than two creatures grabbed.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one or two creatures); +8 vs. Reflex	
Hit: The cube grabs the target (escape DC 15) and pulls the target into its space. Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 10 acid damage and is dazed. When the cube moves, it pulls with it any creature grabbed by it, and the creature remains grabbed and within the cube's space. This movement does not provoke an opportunity attack from the grabbed creature.	
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+4)	**Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 1 (-3)	**Cha** 1 (-3)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

they examine the blocked-off tunnels. The heroes can take a short rest if they want before heading into the area of encounter G4.

2 Green Slimes (S)	Level 4 Lurker
Medium natural beast (blind, ooze)	XP 175 each
HP 47; **Bloodied** 23	**Initiative** +9
AC 18, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 14	**Perception** +2
Speed 4, climb 4	Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects; **Resist** 5 acid; **Vulnerable** 5 fire, 5 radiant	
Traits	
Ooze	
While squeezing, the ooze moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.	
Standard Actions	
Slam (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 5 acid damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).	
Engulf (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 3 acid damage, and the slime grabs the target (escape DC 18). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 10 acid damage. Attacks that hit the slime deal half damage to the slime and half damage to a single creature grabbed by the slime.	
Skills Stealth +10	
Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 11 (+2)	
Con 17 (+5) **Int** 1 (-3) **Cha** 1 (-3)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

4 Duergar Thugs (T)	Level 4 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 44 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +4
AC 16, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14	**Perception** +4
Speed 5	Darkvision
Resist 5 fire, 5 poison	
Standard Actions	
Warhammer (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 8 damage.	
Minor Actions	
Infernal Quills (poison) ✦ **Encounter**	
Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 6 damage, and ongoing 2 poison damage (save ends).	
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+4)	
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+1)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven	
Equipment chainmail, warhammer	

G4. Grasping Goo

Combat Encounter Level 5 (1,125 XP)

The farther into the city the adventurers travel, the worse the ooze infestation becomes.

Perception DC 20: The character spots the green slimes hidden among the slimy tendrils.

Light: Dim (patches of bioluminescent slime).

Monsters: 2 ochre jellies (J), 3 green slimes (S).

Start Area: The characters begin the encounter grouped along the left edge of the map.

When the characters are ready, read:

Thousands of glistening strands of slimy goo hang from the ceiling and reach almost to the floor in the chamber ahead. Splotches of softly glowing slime bathe the room in a patchwork of green, blue, and yellow light. A pair of massive yellow-brown oozes creeps through the hall, just barely visible through the slimy curtain obscuring them.

A character who succeeds on a DC 22 Dungeoneering check recognizes the hanging sheets of goo as a type of grasping slime and is aware of its properties.

The green slimes begin the encounter hidden. Do not place them until they move to attack or are spotted by a character.

Grasping Slime: Squares where the gooey, dangling strands hang down (those with a greenish tint and texture) are difficult terrain and lightly obscured. A creature that moves into a patch of grasping slime must make a DC 15 Athletics check or be restrained (escape DC 15). A creature can avoid the slime by crawling along the floor. Oozes are similarly unaffected.

Treasure: None.

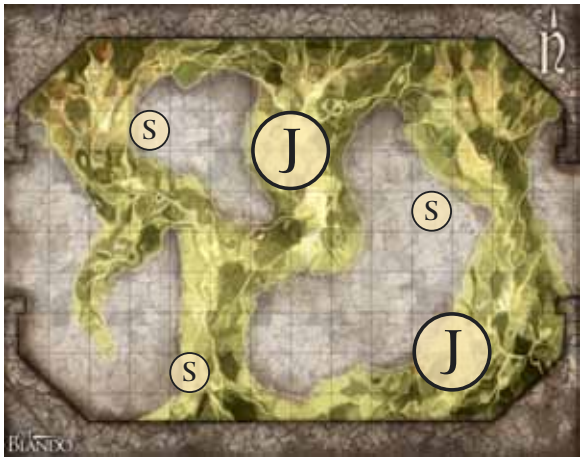
Tactics: The jellies, while not intelligent, quickly come to regard a character they have trouble hitting as "not food" and jiggle off toward the next possible meal. The green slimes prefer to strike from ambush,

grabbing the first target that wanders into range and attempting to use *engulf* on it.

Development

To move deeper into the complex, the characters must travel off the eastern edge of this map and into the area where encounter G5 takes place.

2 Ochre Jellies (J)	**Level 3 Elite Brute**
Large natural beast (blind, ooze)	XP 300 each
HP 102; **Bloodied** 51	**Initiative** +0
AC 15, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14	**Perception** +2
Speed 4, climb 4	Blindsight
Immune blinded, gaze effects; **Resist** 5 acid	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Traits	
Ooze	
While squeezing, the ooze moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Slam** (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 1 damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).	
Move Actions	
Flowing Form ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The ochre jelly shifts up to 4 squares.	
Triggered Actions	
Split ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: The ochre jelly becomes bloodied.	
Effect (No Action): The jelly splits into two creatures, each with hit points equal to one-half its current hit points. Effects on the original ochre jelly do not apply to the second one.	
Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 8 (+0) **Wis** 12 (+2)	
Con 11 (+1) **Int** 1 (-4) **Cha** 1 (-4)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	



3 Green Slimes (S)	**Level 4 Lurker**
Medium natural beast (blind, ooze)	XP 175 each
HP 47; **Bloodied** 23	**Initiative** +9
AC 18, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 14	**Perception** +2
Speed 4, climb 4	Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects; **Resist** 5 acid; **Vulnerable** 5 fire, 5 radiant	
Traits	
Ooze	
While squeezing, the ooze moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Slam** (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 5 acid damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).	
⸸ **Engulf** (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 3 acid damage, and the slime grabs the target (escape DC 18). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 10 acid damage. Attacks that hit the slime deal half damage to the slime and half damage to a single creature grabbed by the slime.	
Skills Stealth +10	
Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 11 (+2)	
Con 17 (+5) **Int** 1 (-3) **Cha** 1 (-3)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

G5. The Sea of Slime

Combat Encounter Level 5 (1,140 XP)

A ragged chasm opened by Hotenow's eruption has slowly filled with slime bubbling up from deeper layers. An enormous statue, uprooted and toppled in the same earthquake, is the only means of negotiating the crevasse.

Light: Dim (patches of bioluminescent slime).

Monsters: 1 black pudding (P), 5 black pudding spawn (S).

Start Area: Although the characters begin the encounter along the west edge of this map, no monsters appear until the heroes have begun to move across the statue and have reached the outlined area just below the tip of the statue's shield.

When the characters can see into this chamber, read:

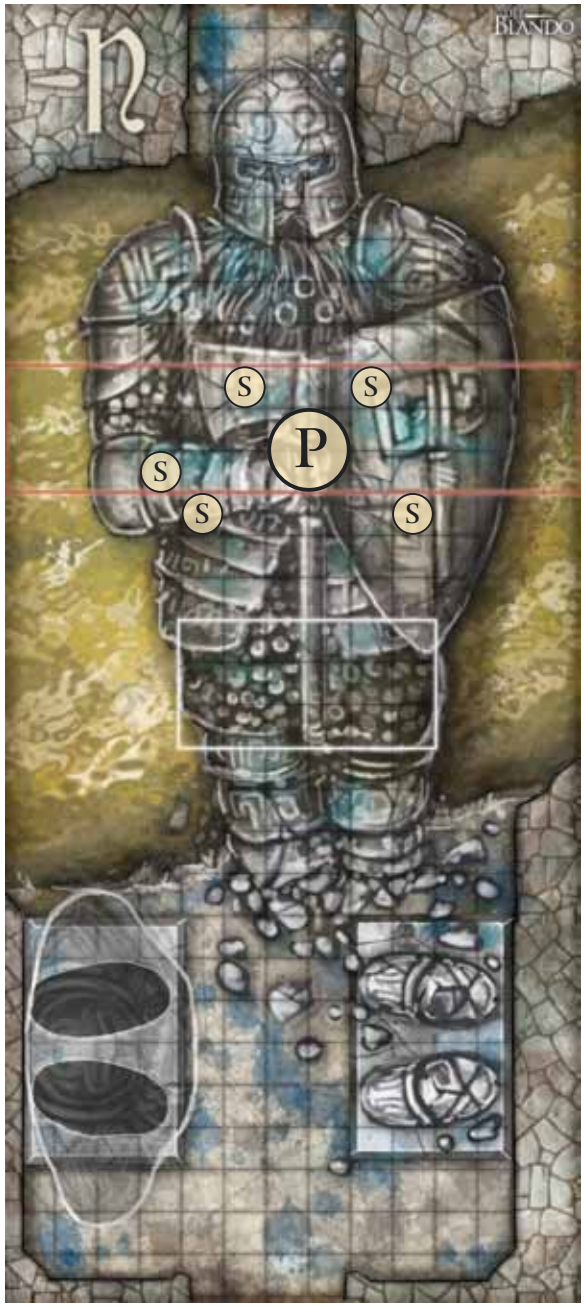
The fallen form of a titanic statue, carved in dwarven proportions and apparently the victim of some great upheaval, bridges a great chasm that stretches away into the darkness on either side of you. Viscous sludge fills the abyss beneath the statue, its quivering surface of mottled yellow, green, and brown rising to within thirty feet of the edge.

When at least two characters move into the outlined area on the map, read:

Welling from the innumerable cracks in the statue like black blood from mortal wounds come a half-dozen tar-colored oozes, their tendrils creeping in your direction.

The puddings spring their trap when the characters have partially crossed the bridge, trusting to their tremorsense to defeat any attempt at stealth. Neither side is aware of the impending detonation, which occurs after the fight has begun (see The Blast, below)

Statue-Bridge: The fallen statue forms a stable bridge for the adventurers to move across and fight



upon. Nothing short of Hotenow erupting again could dislodge it.

Cave Slime: Squares filled with this slippery goo (the areas with a bluish tint) are difficult terrain. Any creature except for an ooze that enters a square of cave slime must make a DC 14 Acrobatics check or fall prone. A character who fails this check by 5 or more while adjacent to the edge of the bridge falls into the lake of acidic goo below.

Acidic Goo: The gash in the earth below the fallen statue is filled with a viscous and highly acidic goo. A creature's fall from the statue above is broken somewhat by the goo, resulting in only 1d10 damage from the 30-foot fall. A creature that starts its turn in the goo takes 10 acid damage.

Thick, rope-like strands of sticky, solidifying slime hang from the underside of the statue down to the surface of the goo and can be climbed with a DC 14 Athletics check.

Treasure: Three garnets (worth 100 gp each) can be found in the remains of the black pudding.

Tactics: The spawn, whether already present or newly created, alternate between swarming targets and scattering to attack fresh characters, seemingly at random. When one is maneuvering, its climb speed enables it to slither along the underside of the statue in safety, returning to the top when it reaches its destination.

The large pudding is attracted to groups of enemies so that its *engulf* can target multiple characters. It reserves *melt* for when it has a creature grabbed and there are no nearby clusters of adventurers.

The Blast

As this combat is getting under way, the duergar are preparing to blast shut the final passageway that leads out of the contaminated area of the city. The powerful explosions reverberate through the stone of nearby chambers, causing the ground to leap and already weakened stonework to collapse.

Black Pudding (P)	**Level 8 Elite Brute**
Large natural beast (blind, ooze)	XP 700
HP 218; **Bloodied** 109	**Initiative** +6
AC 20, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18	**Perception** +4
Speed 4, climb 3	Blind, tremorsense 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects; **Resist** 15 acid	
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Traits	
Ooze	
While squeezing, the pudding moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.	
Standard Actions	
Slam (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 4d6 + 6 acid damage.	
Effect: Before or after the attack, the pudding shifts up to its speed.	
Engulf (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in the blast); +11 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 4d6 + 6 acid damage, and the pudding grabs the target (escape DC 16).	
Melt (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the pudding). The target takes 2d6 + 15 acid damage and loses a healing surge. It takes 10 extra acid damage if it has no healing surges.	
Triggered Actions	
Split ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An enemy hits the pudding with a weapon attack.	
Effect (No Action): A black pudding spawn appears in the unoccupied square closest to the pudding.	
Str 15 (+6) **Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 11 (+4)	
Con 19 (+8) **Int** 1 (-1) **Cha** 1 (-1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

At the end of the round in which the black pudding was first bloodied or at the end of the fifth round of fighting, whichever comes first, the duergar detonate their charges. Every character must make a DC 15 Acrobatics check or be knocked prone as the ground heaves.

The shaking dislodges a chunk of the ceiling, causing it to soon plummet into the battle below. At the

5 Black Pudding Spawn (S)	Level 8 Minion Brute
Medium natural beast (blind, ooze)	XP 88 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +6
AC 20, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18	**Perception** +4
Speed 4, climb 3	Blind, tremorsense 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects; **Resist** 15 acid	
Traits	
Ooze	
While squeezing, the pudding moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Slam** (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 10 acid damage, and the pudding shifts up to its speed.	
Str 15 (+6) **Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 11 (+4)	
Con 19 (+8) **Int** 1 (-1) **Cha** 1 (-1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

end of the round following the tremor, the pieces of the ceiling smash into the area indicated on the map (bounded by the lines across the statue's torso), subjecting every creature in that area to the following attack.

Attack: Special (creatures in the indicated area); +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d10 + 2 damage. The target is dazed until the end of its next turn and knocked prone.

Miss: Half damage, and the target is knocked prone.

A character who has a passive Dungeoneering of 22 or who makes a DC 22 Dungeoneering check (no action) during the round following the tremor can predict where the impact will be.

Development

The path ahead is obvious. The characters must exit the east edge of this map, whereupon they travel through a 20-foot-wide tunnel that eventually deposits them in the chamber where encounter G6 occurs.

G6. Duergar Demolition

Combat Encounter Level 6 (1,375 XP)

Having completed its task, the duergar demolition team is preparing to decamp when the adventurers arrive.

Light: Dim (patches of bioluminescent slime).

Monsters: 2 duergar demolitionists (D), 2 duergar scouts (S), 3 duergar guards (G).

Start Area: The characters begin this encounter in the northwest corner of the map.

When the characters have all entered this area, read:

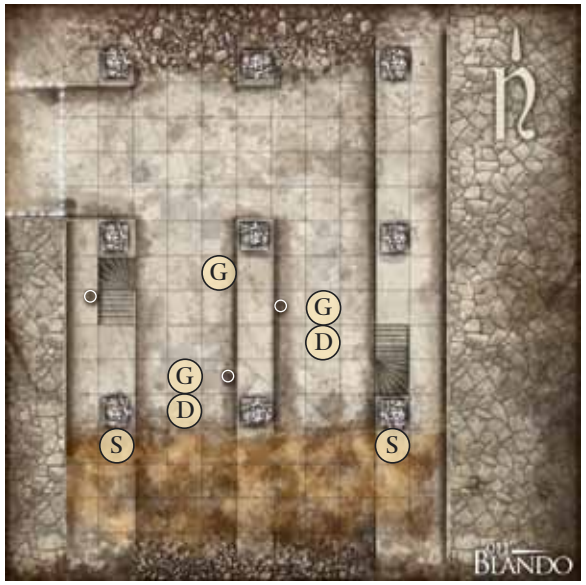
The passage you have been following suddenly opens onto the remains of a great thoroughfare, its span cut short in either direction by tumbled mountains of stone. Two dust-caked duergar wearing protective gear inspect a collapsed section while the rest of the small band looks on.

A DC 15 Dungeoneering check reveals that the collapse the duergar are inspecting is very recent, and it was likely the cause of the severe tremor the characters felt earlier.

Collapsed Passages: The demolition of the passage was complete. The blockages to the north and south are impassable.

Thoroughfare and Median: Two 15-foot-wide passages running north and south are divided by a center median and framed on their outside by an elevated walkway of similar construction. The center median and the walkways are 10 feet higher than the thoroughfare. Stairs allow easy access to each of the walkways, but a creature must climb (Athletics DC 20) to reach the median.

Dust Cloud: The settling rubble releases a constant stream of dust that hangs in the air. The squares within 3 squares of the tunnel's most recently collapsed end are lightly obscured.



Statues: These statues are undamaged and remain firmly mounted on their bases, remarkable considering how close they were to the demolition. They are blocking terrain, but they cannot be toppled as other statues in the complex can be.

Explosive Casks: These small barrels are filled with volatile alchemical explosives that the duergar use in their demolitions. (The map depicts three casks, one near the west stairs and one on either side of the center meridian; you can create others if desired.) A creature can hurl a cask as a standard action to make the following attack.

Attack: Area burst 1 within 5 (creatures in the burst); +9 vs. Reflex.

Hit: 2d6 + 3 fire damage.

The characters probably saw these casks in action during encounter G3, and if so, they already know about them. Otherwise, a character who succeeds on a DC 21 Arcana check to inspect an adjacent cask as a minor action realizes what they are and how they

2 Duergar Demolitionists (D)	Level 6 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf	XP 250 each
HP 74; **Bloodied** 37	**Initiative** +4
AC 20, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17	**Perception** +5
Speed 5	Darkvision
Resist 5 fire, 5 poison	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Chillflame Morningstar** (cold, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 5 cold damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
✲ **Iron Bomb** (fire) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in the burst); +9 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d6 + 2 fire damage. The target is pushed up to 2 squares from the center of the burst, and is knocked prone.	
Minor Actions	
⊘ **Infernal Quills** (poison) ✦ **Encounter**	
Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +11 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both).	
Double Pack ✦ **Encounter**	
Effect: The next time the demolitionist uses *iron bomb* before the end of its next turn, the burst's size is increased by 1.	
Skills Arcana +11, Dungeoneering +10	
Str 13 (+4) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+5)	
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 17 (+6) **Cha** 8 (+2)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven	
Equipment chainmail, morningstar, alchemical supplies	

2 Duergar Scouts (S)	Level 4 Lurker
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf	XP 175 each
HP 48; **Bloodied** 24	**Initiative** +8
AC 18, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16	**Perception** +9
Speed 5	Darkvision
Resist 5 fire, 5 poison	
Traits	
Shadow Attack	
The duergar scout's attacks deal 4d6 extra damage when the scout hits a target that cannot see it.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Warhammer** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 4 damage.	
⊘ **Crossbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.	
Underdark Sneak ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The scout becomes invisible until the end of its next turn or until it hits or misses with an attack.	
Minor Actions	
⊘ **Infernal Quills** (poison) ✦ **Encounter**	
Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both).	
Skills Dungeoneering +9, Stealth +9	
Str 13 (+3) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+4)	
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+1	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven	
Equipment chainmail, warhammer, crossbow	

can be used without needing to have seen one in action. The DM should let characters know that they can attempt this check.

A cask can be targeted (hp 10; defenses 10; immune necrotic, poison, psychic, Will; vulnerable 10 fire) and explodes when reduced to 0 hit points, making the above attack in a close burst 1.

Treasure: An uncommon level 8 item and 150 gp. The characters also find a coded missive, written in Dwarven, in one of the piles of gear. While the actual instructions are a jumble of vague references, code phrases, and allusions, they appear to be a guide for getting the demolition team from the surface back to Gauntlgrym proper.

Tactics: The duergar fight as a team. The guards form a protective front line while the scouts provide covering fire and pick off threats, such as ranged characters, that the guards are not equipped to handle. The demolitionists employ their explosives to break up groups of characters and to soften up tactically important characters with debilitating conditions.

3 Duergar Guards (G)	Level 4 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 175 each
HP 58; **Bloodied** 29	**Initiative** +6
AC 20, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15	**Perception** +4
Speed 5	Darkvision
Resist 5 fire, 5 poison	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Warhammer** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.	
Effect: The duergar guard marks the target until the end of the target's next turn.	
Minor Actions	
Infernal Anger (fire) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅	
Effect: Until the start of the guard's next turn, its melee attacks deal 4 extra fire damage, and if an enemy adjacent to the guard moves, the guard can shift 1 square as an immediate reaction.	
⊗ **Infernal Quills** (poison) ✦ **Encounter**	
Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both).	
Skills Dungeoneering +9	
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+4)	
Con 18 (+6) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+1)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven	
Equipment chainmail, warhammer	

Aftermath

The adventurers have reached the end of the road in Gauntlgrym. The duergar have done their jobs admirably, sealing off the ooze-infested section of the city behind untold tons of stone. Breaching the quarantine would be all but impossible, even without taking the marauding oozes into account.

Undiscovered side passages and excavated chambers populated with all manner of oozes or other dungeon denizens could be used to expand the adventure in this section of the city, but the coded duergar map the characters discover in the final encounter provides the best means for the characters to continue their search for Gauntlgrym's heart. Exactly what sort of adventures the characters must undertake to decode the map and reach their final destination is left up to you, though the path is sure to be long and fraught with danger.

About the Author

Daniel Marthaler is a writer, primarily for D&D Insider, whose credits include the adventures *Sunderpeak Temple*, *Lord of the White Field*, *Evard's Shadow*, and *Legacy of Io*.

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Dirty Tricks

By Stephen Radney-MacFarland

Illustration by Eric Belisle

The conventional wisdom is that when you take on the mantle of Dungeon Master, you become an unflappable, fair, and impartial arbiter of the game. You're there to make sure it runs smoothly and that the rules are evenly adjudicated. Over the last few years, I've given plenty of advice on how to do that, but sometimes you have to throw those principles out the window. Sometimes to keep your game interesting and keep the people sitting around the table engaged, you're going to have to turn those assumptions of impartiality on their head. You are going to have to reach into a bag of dirty tricks and do bad things for good reasons.

A word of warning before we move on: The difference between a good DM and a not-so-good DM has a great deal to do with how often he or she uses these dirty tricks. Though it should go without saying, these dirty tricks are definitely not modus operandi for typical play. Dirty tricks work best when used in moderation, and only when you are utterly desperate or finding yourself needing them for very focused reasons. Those reasons (or overcoming the moments of desperation) should have one goal—to make the play experience better for everyone. The hard part is that, like all dirty tricks, the ones I'm presenting are often performed clandestinely. They involve deception at best, trickery at worst, and often when using them you run the risk of being caught in a lie. When you're caught, I suggest trying a sheepish smile to get out of it. Perfecting that particular facial expression can get you out of a lot of trouble with your players, I've found.

Regardless, the idea is to use these dirty tricks for good—for the benefit of your game, your players, and your own enjoyment. Do not use them to torment, or to improve your self-esteem. Don't use them to smack down that insufferable power gamer in your group, even though you really want to. Bitter vengeance is like junk food—it seems good when you eat it, but eventually you will pay the price. Intent is everything here.

Roll Behind the Screen and Lie

This might be the oldest trick in the book. It's so old and well used that some DMs don't consider it a trick at all. But it is.

To be honest, I'm a big fan of rolling out in the open and letting the dice fall where they may, so much so that my players consistently expect such behavior out of me. At the same time, I do keep a small set of dice behind my screen for the rare occasion when I have to make a Bluff check against a player's Insight. Why would I do such a thing? It depends. Often it is to build tension. Is it more

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fun for the PCs to make that crucial Stealth or Bluff check? Yeah, that's right. I'll fudge it a little. Would one more attack outright kill a PC? I'll do it again. I know that some of you may be aghast at such wanton disregard for the sacred randomness that makes the engine of D&D roll, and I understand that, but here is where I am coming from. In case you don't know this, the core assumption of D&D (and all roleplaying games) is that the PCs are heroes—they do heroic things, and will ultimately succeed (ish). Although success should never come cheap, there are times when the dice just don't agree. While they are great tools for the job, they are heartless, cruel, and will often work against the narration that make RPGs work.

In other words, sometimes those dice need to be modified with more than just the typical and sanctioned +2 ad hoc modifier, and even, at times, they need to be outright ignored.

Like I said before, don't go overboard. Your players should never feel as though success is imminent. You should always keep them on their toes. Stress, extreme tension, and the real possibility of failure should always stalk the game table, ready to sink its claws into the flesh of heroes. My players will tell you, I'm not afraid to let a character bleed out and die. The trick is to make those moments count; make them mean something. Finding just the right times to use this trick usually comes from knowing your players well. If you are running a Dungeons & Dragons Encounters™ session or some other organized play activity, you might not want to use this dirty trick at all. A sense of fairness and openness is important for these programs (especially the upcoming Lair Assault program), and you rarely get a chance to get to know the narrative rhythm of players you just met a short time ago. A good rule of thumb is the longer you know your players, the more you can get away with this dirty trick.

I've talked a great deal about performing this trick in the PCs' favor, but there is another way—albeit a more controversial way—to use this trick: for the benefit of villains and monsters.

The reason for doing this dastardly thing is the same as for cheating on the behalf of the characters. It's always toward the creation of more fun. Usually I will do this when what a monster or villain I've set up as particularly bad-ass does not fulfill that potential purely by accident of bad die rolls. There is nothing more aggravating to both you and your players when the big bad guy is nothing more than a paper tiger. Giving a round or two when that dragon, demon, evil archmage, or grandfather of the assassins is guaranteed to act as it is designed to can create a better experience for your players. Only the most craven players want the bad guy to be a pushover. Players want to tell the story about how they beat something that was potent and dangerous; they easily forget the chaff and the blowhards. But be judicious with this aspect of the trick—going too far can easily backfire against the PCs, which runs roughshod over the reason you are doing it in the first place, and like a lie that begets a lie, you'll have to dirty trick your way out of the mistake. Remember, the assumption is that the PCs will fight hard, will make hard choices, and will ultimately win.

Choo! Choo! Everyone on the Train

Of all the dirty tricks, there is none more persuasive and less innocuous than railroading. Railroading occurs at those places in the narration where the DM takes a heavy hand when it comes to PC choice. It has a bad rap, and for some very good reasons. One of the strengths of tabletop RPGs is that players at least feel that they have control of their own destiny. The world is their oyster, as it were; they often feel entitled to that feeling, and they should. They're limited only by their imaginations, the matrix of decisions the rules allow, and the information that the DM gives them about the world around them. It's an important illusion, and it often sets a tabletop RPG apart from the strict controls and rigid environments of computer games. But it is still just an illusion. Everytime a DM reads the background for an adventure, presents the flavor text, or tells the players the actions of an NPC outside of combat, to some extent this is railroading.

The truth at the core of railroading is that when it is done with moderation and care for your audience, there is nothing wrong with it. It presents the parameters of the challenges that players and characters have to face. It often feels wrong only when viewed from the perspective of the adventure's reader. Many potential DMs will read an adventure and accuse it of railroading because it presents the parameters in a way that they see as arbitrary. That's not the way they would have done it, and because most of us, whether we like to believe it or not, treat the written word as sacrosanct, those readers might not think they have the power to modify it for their own purposes. That's just bullpucky.

It is perfectly fine to railroad if it creates a degree of excitement in you and your players. Railroading is bad only if you do not allow your players to use their abilities and powers to help modify the situation. If they feel helpless, they will rebel against railroading and cry foul. If it sets up an interesting encounter, they will often thank you for it. It allows them to move quickly into the true decision points, and that is where the fun happens.

Really, railroading at its best is the conceit that not every little action in the game needs to be played out with mechanical precision—that it is okay for the DM to take a group of vague or broad statements from the players and then tell them what happens in broad strokes.

Change the "Facts"

Roleplaying games are narrative constructs, and as such, there are very few facts, at least in the philosophical sense. Rather there are events, perceptions, and the assumptions that your players take away. The closest things to facts in an RPG are the powers, spells, abilities, and equipment that a character has and uses. Players have a reasonable expectation for these things to work in a consistent manner. But when it comes to the motivations of NPCs, and even the descriptions of the topography of a campaign world, often these "facts" live in the realm of perception. And perceptions can be modified or often wrong. Have you ever been in a situation when you thought you knew what was going on, but in hindsight or with more information, you found that you were totally off the mark? The same can happen to PCs, and you can manipulate this phenomenon.

In one of my current campaigns, the PCs met and then made a deal with a creature they knew as the Secret of Vecna. Though they suspected the creature was untrustworthy, they dealt with him because he had something they wanted, and they owned a thing that the creature wanted. It also helped that the thing the characters owned, a certain famous demilich trapped in a magically warded ale keg, was something the players knew they would eventually have to dispose of. When I created this little moral dilemma, I had some vague ideas about the nature of the Secret of Vecna, I even wrote a bit of backstory about this servant of the Master of Secrets. My original plan was that this mysterious Secret of Vecna was an exarch of the god, but as the story went on, and we were approaching the epic tier, I found that I wanted to do something a little more dramatic—something really big. I actively went back and changed the "facts" of the Secret of Vecna, making it not an exarch, but the god himself. Its secret was that it was Vecna in disguise. Since the PCs never came into actual conflict with the Secret of Vecna, this was relatively easy to do. I just looked down at my notes, scratched some words out, and rewrote the story toward my new purposes.

Even relatively drastic changes to the facts can be easy to pull off when you are the DM. It helps that, like Vecna himself, you are a master of the secrets of your campaign. They can change on a whim as long as they stay consistent with what you've already told the players, and as long as doing so does not adversely affect the way your players have interacted with a creature, object, or location in the game. Even so, don't be afraid to create some instances of contradiction. A map can be wrong, the nature of an object can be obscured, information can be false, and narrators can be unreliable . . . even when that narrator is you.

Mailbag

It's time to take a look in the mailbag. Unfortunately I don't have a lot of letters this month. I've gotten relatively few general advice questions, and the ones I have received I feel like I've covered before. I do want to thank all of you who have sent advice on having creating a healthier game table. Personally, thanks in no small part to your feedback and advice (not to mention some stores of personal willpower) I've been able to shed a good number of pounds so far. So yay, you!

Please, inundate me with your questions. You can ask them in person, through Twitter, or on Facebook, but the best way to get them into my mind is by way of the Save My Game group on the Wizards Community site. So get me those questions, and I look forward to featuring them in next month's column.

About the Author

Stephen Radney-MacFarland is a game designer living large in the Seattle area. He was a developer for 4th Edition Dungeons & Dragons, a content developer for 3rd Edition organized play, and he has taught game design for the past three years. Stephen currently works at Paizo Publishing as a designer for the *Pathfinder* Roleplaying Game, writes "Save My Game," and works on the occasional D&D product. He also runs more games than his wife would prefer.

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FORGOTTEN REALMS®

ED GREENWOOD'S
Eye on the Realms

The Winking Eyes of Rhauron

By Ed Greenwood

Illustration by Julie Dillon

In the endless tavern-talk of the Realms, amid all the wildly embroidered accounts of dragons, flying skulls that whisper doom, wronged unfortunates who rise from the dead to seek revenge, and the latest pratfalls and eccentricities of kings, a new element has arisen: many mutterings about "winking gems" that flash once when touched, then melt into the palms and fingers of those handling them—unless the gems are instantly hurled away and shunned.

Stories of jewels that turn into dragons, laughing evil wizards, or even bewildered long-lost folk who've been trapped in gem shape for years have always been plentiful, but these winking gem reports all began about the same time—four summers back—and share similarities, including the fact that those the gems "melt into" behave differently thereafter: almost always they begin to travel, as if seeking or hunting someone—and usually end up murdering a specific individual.

It's as if some unknown fell sentience is behind the gems, using them to turn random unfortunates into unwitting assassins.

The entity behind the gems remains mysterious. "Rhauron" is merely a name a bard applied to "the one who controls the winking gems," probably to cast suspicion on a person of that name whom he desired to get even with. (Some say the bard was the wanderer Lothlyn Arngoblet, and the Rhauron he thus vilified is Asgandur Durhauron of The Dragonhaven Hearth in Proskur, an innkeeper who engaged him for making music at a feast, but refused to pay the agreed-upon fee afterward.)

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Winking Gems

All the winking gems are translucent, clear (that is, flaw- and inclusion-free), faceted gems of unusually large but not gigantic size. According to the warrior-adventurer Drunn Bruldeiran of Crimmor, who saw one melt into the palm of a horrified Calishite caravan merchant, they're "about as small as the endmost joint of a large man's thumb, and oftentimes doubly large and impressive." Reports identify them as many sorts of stones, from rubies and sapphires through emeralds and diamonds.

Elminster has seen this method of delivering fell magic before and explains that the gems bear invisible enchantments. If one of them is held bare-handed for too long by a living mammal (if conflicting sworn and credible reports are to be believed, what's "too long" varies widely from stone to stone), the spell on the gem activates. If the stone is handled with gloves or through other substances that prevent direct gem-to-flesh contact, activation won't occur.

An activated stone winks (emits a brief, bright but not blinding, silent flash of white light), then begins to "melt" into the body of the handler (who feels nothing at all as the gem sinks into flesh).

When the winking occurs, the handler has an instant—no more—to let go of the gem and avoid being affected by the magic (if this happens, the enchantment subsides to await the next direct gem-to-flesh contact). If the stone is dropped or flung blindly, this act might be swift enough, but if the handler tries to hurl the stone away in a specific direction or to a certain distance, contact has almost always been too long; the gem will affect the handler.

The strength of the winking gems' effects apparently varies from handler to handler, gem to gem, and length of contact (fleeting, a few moments, or for the entire melting process, which Bruldeiran says takes "a slowish verbal count of three").

Gemthralldom

When a winking gem melts into someone's body, the person experiences a momentary falling sensation, instantly acquires a purple-blue tinge around the edges of his or her vision, and then the face of a (probably totally unfamiliar) human appears vividly in the mind: the first vision of the individual the victim is to hunt and slay.

The mental image of the face persists in the back of the victim's mind, always keeping the victim aware of its target but not so obtrusive to be a distraction in combat, spellcasting, or other activities.

If contact with the gem was too brief for it to melt, there will be no falling sensation, and the purple-blue tinge and vision of the face will appear once, then seem to fade from consciousness; thereafter, the would-be victim is free of all gem effects.

When a winking gem melts into someone, that person must make a saving throw with a -4 penalty to throw off all gem effects except those described above, plus just one recurrence: the vision of the face will briefly come into the person's mind during an idle moment the next day.

If the saving throw failed, the person will see the mysterious face once a day thereafter. After four days have passed, this vision will be accompanied by an urgent feeling that the victim should go to this person (though no whereabouts will be given).

The victim will continue to briefly and daily see the face, and on the eighth day of being affected by the gem, the vision of the face appears in a scene showing the abode or the location of the face's owner. The victim might not realize what this building or place is, but four days later the face appears again, and then the vision "zooms out" to display the body the face is attached to, then pull back even more to show the abode or the location before fading once more.

Every four days thereafter, the victim receives a brief, silent vision of the face, followed by a scene of its owner traveling if that individual is on the move, or more views of where the owner can be found if not. Later visions will show more specifics of the layout of the dwelling, its defenses if any, and sometimes door keys or badges necessary for entry, and gear, magic weapons, or treasure that might be needed to manage the slaying, accompanied by ever stronger urgings to go to the owner of the face—thoughts now accompanied by a growing need to slay that person.

A Remove Affliction ritual will end these gem effects instantly and permanently. Otherwise, they continue until the victim of the gem dies, the target perishes (regardless of how), or a successful saving throw is made to throw off the gem effects.

The Underlying Story

The gems seek to change their victims into the thralls of a distant (somewhere in western Laerakond) thrallherd psion (see *Psionic Power*), which sends the visions and reaches out to briefly control the minds of its thralls.

At each control attempt, a thrall is allowed a saving throw—with a -3 penalty to the first attempt, -2 to the second, -1 to the third, no penalty to the fourth, a +1 bonus to the fifth, and so on. Any successful saving throw breaks the thralldom, causing one last face-vision to be received the next day (all gem effects then end forever).

The first control attempt comes about a month after gem-melt, if the thrall has ignored the visions (has not yet made any attempt to travel toward or seek out the target). The goal of every attempt is to cause the thrall to travel to try to reach (or hunt for) the target.

If a thrall tries to find its target without being controlled, no control attempt is made until the target

is located—but at that point, turning away or delaying the attack for any reason will bring on a control attempt.

When the thrall and its target are in proximity, the dark, cold intellect of the mysterious entity behind the gems floods the mind of the thrall and directs it in an assassination attempt that cares nothing for the thrall's life or future, but cares very much for making certain the target is slain, destroyed beyond recovery, and has no chance for escape or magical rescue. If the target is well protected by guards or the thrall has little chance of attacking the target long enough to achieve a kill, the controlling entity directs the thrall to retreat temporarily.

If the saving throw against this control attempt fails, the thrall is controlled by the gem-entity for the duration of the attempted assassination, up to the point of either a successful temporary retreat from the attempt, or a first strike at the target.

After a thrall has either retreated or made a first strike, it is allowed another saving throw to break free of its thralldom and refrain from attacking the target. If that saving throw fails, the assassination attempt continues.

If the target survives the thrall's attack, and the controlling entity tries to force the thrall to pursue, the thrall gets yet another saving throw. (If the entity orders the thrall to retreat and try again on another occasion, no saving throw is allowed until the next time the entity tries to compel the thrall to attack the target.)

Targets of the Gemslayers

Only recently have some observers begun to suspect the connection or common element between individuals who have been murdered by thralls of the winking gems: All of these people recently fled the continent variously known as Laerakond (to most who dwell on it) or Returned Abeir (to most of the relatively few Faerûnians who know of its existence) and reached Faerûn.

Specifically, they all fled one man (as a creditor, foe, or rival) variously described as the master of a guild in the Dusk Port of Tarsith, a reclusive archmage of awesome magical powers, or a powerful investor and sage.

Some knew him as Aranglamarr the Bold, and others as Belmorth or Glarymatar the Glorious. (Until his true identity is known, Elminster has commented, "Rhauron" seems as good a name for him as any.)

Whatever this Laerakondan's true name and nature, he caused the gems to be enchanted and conveyed to Faerûn (though how and by whom remain mysteries).

Rhauron appears to be hunting down and eliminating all who have crossed him, and he has chosen this method to strike at persons who left his continent to escape him.

Some prominent individuals who were recently attacked, but survived (usually by slaying their attackers), might well be among Rhauron's targets. All have since fled or gone into hiding; presumably they know who's hunting them and believe that his pursuit continues. According to reports, one or two winking gems a month are still turning up.

Those who have escaped initial slaying attempts and have obscure or mysterious pasts (and so might have come from Laerakond) include Harengar Madroon of Athkatla (son of the proprietor of the famous Madroon's Curio's shop), the wealthy gem merchant Haelor Hammantle of Waterdeep, and Alys Sakurth (a grim, sharp-tongued woman who has recently risen to prominence in Selgaunt as a wealthy trader in wines and scents).

About the Author

Ed Greenwood is the man who unleashed the Forgotten Realms® setting on an unsuspecting world. He works in libraries, plus he writes fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, and romance stories (sometimes all in the same novel), but he is happiest when churning out Realmslore, Realmslore, and more Realmslore. He still has a few rooms in his house in which he has space left to pile up papers.

Shards of Selûne

A Dungeons & Dragons® adventure for characters of levels 1-3

By Andrew G. Schneider

Illustrations by Craig J Spearing and Sam Burley

Cartography by Sean Macdonald

Introduction

"Shards of Selûne" takes place in Neverwinter, a city still recovering from the Spellplague and the eruption of Mount Hotenow. The adventurers must recover the shards of Selûne—three gemstones that have fallen from the sky as shooting stars—before the jewels end up in the wrong hands.

This adventure is designed for characters of levels 1–3. It makes use of the character themes and city information presented in the *Neverwinter™ Campaign Setting*.

Adventure Background

Selûne gazed down upon Neverwinter and despaired, so great were the evil forces arrayed against its recovery. Heroes walked the streets, but they did not see the evils for what they were. Last night, the goddess shed three tears that, in the form of shooting stars, fell amid the bleakest parts of the city. These so-called shards of Selûne are gemstones that give off bright moonlight. Lady Jasmine, a priestess of Selûne, recognized the meteors as signs of the goddess's intervention. She seeks heroes to recover the jewels.

Adventure Synopsis

Once set to the task of recovering the shards of Selûne, the adventurers are free to retrieve the three glowing gemstones in any order. One shard lies beyond the Wall, a fortified barrier separating the safe areas of the city from monster-infested ruins. The adventurers must battle or evade plaguechanged monstrosities to recover this gemstone. A second shard has fallen into the Blacklake District, and the party must compete with numerous factions to steal it back from a group of halfling thieves. The third shard rests in the Shard of Night, a floating tower that once belonged to Selûne but is now in the hands of the Netherese. In the process of recovering this shard, the adventurers have the opportunity to restore the tower to Selûne's control.

When her shards are recovered and the evils in Neverwinter are exposed, Selûne leaves the fate of the city in the adventurers' capable hands.

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Adventure Hooks

Here are a couple of ways the adventurers might become involved in this story.

- Characters witness the falling stars. The next morning, they hear that Lady Jasmine, a priestess of Selûne, is asking for help from able adventurers regarding these meteors.
- Perhaps as a result of a vision, Lady Jasmine seeks out the characters on the streets of Neverwinter. She asks them to come to the nearby shrine of Selûne to help her with a task of great importance.

Character Themes

The character themes of the heroes in the party will have a major effect on how this adventure unfolds.

Required Themes: An event that has one or more required themes takes place only if the party includes such a character. For example, a group that includes a Neverwinter noble or an heir of Delzoun can get the adventure under way with Event 1.1.

Optional Themes: An event that has one or more optional themes provides extra choices or information if the party includes characters who have the optional theme. If multiple optional themes are present in the party for a particular event, you can use the information given for all of them, or you can disregard certain pieces of information that don't fit with your campaign.

Events

The Starting Event introduces the situation to the characters. After that, events are grouped and numbered according to their associated shard. Although the shards are referred to as first, second, and third, those labels are for identification only and do not indicate a sequence. Adventurers can seek out the shards in any order.

Starting Event. Chosen by the Goddess

Roleplaying Encounter

The adventure begins when Lady Jasmine, an eladrin priestess of Selûne, approaches the heroes. In this scene, she tells the characters of the shards and her need of the party's help to retrieve the jewels.

Lady Jasmine wears white robes, and she has snow-white hair and opalescent eyes. She interrupts the characters politely and asks for a moment of their time to request their aid.

When Lady Jasmine speaks further, read:

"Last night," she says, "three shooting stars fell into the city. I believe these were neither portents nor mere celestial bodies, but true tears of Selûne come to earth in solid form. I need you to recover these shards and deliver them safely to me. Those of us who revere Selûne believe that she is sending us a message—possibly a warning. With your help, we shall learn the truth."

To help the adventurers begin their search, Lady Jasmine provides the following information.

- The first shard landed near the Protector's Enclave on the far side of the Wall.
- The second shard fell within the Blacklake District.
- The third shard came down over the River District.

Lady Jasmine cannot provide more information if the characters press her (but see the "Knowledge of Selûne" sidebar). If the adventurers agree to retrieve the shards, they gain the major quests described below. Lady Jasmine asks the party to bring the three gemstones to the shrine of Selûne and place them on the altar. She guarantees ample rewards for the adventurers' efforts.

As treasures, the shards are worth 500 gp apiece, but they hold far greater value to Selûne's worshipers—both symbolically, as representations of their goddess, and in actuality. The shards, when brought together and used properly, have the power to break the Netherese control over the Shard of Night.

QUEST: RETRIEVE A SHARD

2nd-Level Major Quest

Each character receives 125 XP for each shard retrieved and delivered safely to Lady Jasmine.

Knowledge of Selûne

Characters can learn the following facts about Selûne with a DC 8 Religion check or in conversation with Lady Jasmine. A character who has the Selûne domain automatically knows this information.

- Selûne, the Moonmaiden, is the good goddess of the moon. Alongside her dark sister, Shar, she created the world.
- The goddess counsels her followers to never lose hope, to bring light to the darkness, and to soothe lycanthropes that have lost control of the beast within them.
- Selûne used to gaze down from her home on the moon, advocating compassion and restraint. Since the Spellplague, she and her followers have taken a more active role in the world.

Conclusion

The party's themes can help you determine what happens next, especially if the characters have no plan for which shard to pursue first.

Heir of Delzoun or Neverwinter Noble: Lord Neverember's spies report the presence of such characters in the party. Go to Event 1.1.

Bregan D'aerthe Spy or Dead Rat Deserter: With their contacts and street savvy, such characters know they can easily locate the first shard. If the characters want to try to leverage this advantage, go to Event 1.2.

None of the Above: The adventurers have to do some legwork to find any shard's location. Depending on the shard they want to search for first, the adventure continues with Event 1.3, the section titled "The Second Shard" (page 8), or the section titled "The Third Shard" (page 17).

The First Shard

One shard fell into the ruins beyond the Wall. The plaguechanged monstrosities that roam the streets in this area do not understand its nature, but they find the gem's light strangely alluring. A number of them have gathered in the shard's vicinity.

Characters can find out information on the shard's location in the first three of the four following events. Depending on their themes and actions, the adventurers have a chance to recover the shard in Event 1.2 or Event 1.4.

Event 1.1. Privilege of Nobility

Roleplaying Encounter

Required Theme: Neverwinter noble or heir of Delzoun

As the characters leave the shrine of Selûne, a messenger approaches them.

When this happens, read:

"Lord Protector Dagult Neverember requests the honor of your presence at the Hall of Justice for some light refreshments and a discussion of how Neverwinter's resources might be placed at your disposal."

If the characters accept, Lord Neverember greets them warmly. However, he has an agenda.

- He is suspicious of nobles from Waterdeep and wants to make sure their loyalties lie with him before he divulges any information.
- He wants to find the fabled dwarven city of Gauntlgrym so he can secure dwarven support in Neverwinter. He tells a character who has the heir of Delzoun theme of his search for the lost city and willingness to employ adventurers in such missions.
- He asks the characters to help him with a "small problem that threatens the city's safety." He says that after they complete this task, he will be more than happy to assist them.

Lord Neverember knows that a shooting star fell just beyond the Wall last night and has attracted the attention of the plaguechanged creatures of the ruins. He believes the populace might benefit from seeing true nobility in action, and he asks the party to lead a contingent of his soldiers to destroy the monsters and remove the fallen object. If the adventurers agree, he also furnishes them with *potions of healing* from his personal stock.

If the adventurers inform Lord Neverember of Lady Jasmine and what she told them about the shards of Selûne, he seems to know all this information already and expresses only mild interest in the shards. He reiterates that he wants the monsters dealt with, so his needs coincide with the party's.

Treasure: 5 *potions of healing*.

Conclusion

The party's choice determines what happens next.

Leading Neverember's Soldiers: This choice places the party in direct opposition to the rebel group known as the Sons of Alagondar. If they haven't already found the second shard, the adventurers might have a harder time navigating the Blacklake District (as detailed in Event 2.3). The adventure continues with Event 1.4.

Refusing the Lord: If the adventurers insist on retrieving the shard without Lord Neverember's help, the Lord Protector dismisses them with a friendly smile. However, his suspicions are aroused. He has the party followed and might take more dramatic action if he suspects interference with his plans. The heroes can continue either with Event 1.2 (if they have a required theme) or Event 1.3 before they experience Event 1.4.

Shard Location: In either case, the adventurers learn that the shard has fallen just on the other side of the Wall from the Protector's Enclave.

Event 1.2. Wet Ways

Skill Challenge Level 2 (500 XP)

Required Theme: Bregan D'aerthe spy or Dead Rat deserter

Optional Themes: Devil's pawn, spellscarred harbinger

By working with their contacts, adventurers who have at least one of the required themes find out two facts.

- The shard fell near the edge of the Chasm.
- Ruins surrounding the Chasm are incredibly dangerous. However, the city sewer system should run nearly all the way to where the shard fell.

Navigating the Sewers

The adventurers must carefully traverse the broken sewers under the area near the Chasm to reach the shard without encountering the plaguechanged. Use their checks to create a story of their journey.

Level: 2 (500 XP).

Complexity: 4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures).

Time Frame: Each character can make a check in this challenge once per hour.

Special: Due to his or her affinity with the Spellplague, a character who has the spellscarred harbinger theme gains a +2 bonus to all checks made in this skill challenge.

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Dungeoneering, Perception, Stealth, Thievery.

Acrobatics (DC 13, two successes maximum): The character wriggles, flips, or balances to traverse a narrow or unstable section of the sewers and find a more secure crossing for the rest of the party.

Dungeoneering (DC 13, three successes maximum): The character evaluates several tunnels, determining which is the most stable. Alternatively, the character recognizes signs of plaguechanged monsters in the area and helps the party avoid them. A result of 20 or higher on this check counts as two successes.

Perception (DC 13, three successes maximum): The character notices signs of nearby creatures in time for the party to choose a different route. Alternatively, the adventurer spots a new sewer entry after monsters or collapsed tunnels force the party to the surface.

Stealth (DC 20, three successes maximum): The character helps the party move through the sewers without leaving tracks or being seen. Alternatively, the character scouts ahead to check the safety of a potential path.

Thievery (DC 13, three successes maximum): The character unlocks grates and doors.

Secondary Skills: Arcana, History.

Arcana (DC 20): The character can sense the presence of nearby plaguechanged, granting a +2 bonus to the party's next Dungeoneering check or Perception check.

History (DC 20): The character remembers what the sewers looked like on old maps, granting a +2 bonus to the party's next Stealth check or Thievery check.

Success: The characters arrive at an exit from the sewers that deposits them close to the Wall near where the shard came down. Optionally, especially if the group had no failures and the players want some action, the characters find one of the monster groups detailed in "Failure" guarding the sewer exit, and they have to fight their way free.

Failure: A group of wandering plaguechanged creatures attacks the party. Use one of the following combat encounters.

- 1 aboleth remnant, 2 guard drakes, 1 nothic mindwarp, 4 human goons (level 2; 724 XP; *Neverwinter Campaign Setting*, pages 93 and 95, and *Monster Vault*™, pages 82 and 170).
- 2 guard drakes, 2 common bandits, 8 human goons (level 2; 748 XP; *Monster Vault*, pages 82 and 170).
- 2 grell stranglers, 1 nothic mindwarp, 9 human goons (level 3; 779 XP; *Neverwinter Campaign Setting*, pages 94–95, and *Monster Vault*, page 170).

After this encounter, the characters find their way to the sewer exit without further difficulty.

Optional Themes

If a character has an appropriate optional theme, you can use the related scene.

Devil's Pawn: As they move toward the Chasm, the adventurers come across a patrol of slain Mintarn soldiers. A quick search of the bodies reveals the sign of Asmodeus branded into the chest of two patrol members. Hidden in a guard's belt, the party also finds two *potions of healing*.

Spellscarred Harbinger: On seeing the Chasm, visions of enormous blue tentacles reaching out of the depths and into the city overwhelm any character who has the spellscarred harbinger theme. The vision changes to show an army of plaguechanged charging through the ruins, the ground bubbling and mutating in the creatures' wake.

Event 1.3. Streets of the City

Skill Challenge Level 2 (375 XP)

Optional Themes: Devil's pawn, spellscarred harbinger

The Protector's Enclave is touted as the most civilized district in Neverwinter, which isn't saying much. Lord Neverember's spies and Mintarn soldiers lord their power over the citizenry and viciously crack down on any disturbance, real or perceived.

Keeping a Low Profile

The adventurers must navigate the Protector's Enclave in search of the first shard without running afoul of Neverwinter's high-handed peacekeeping force. Use the party's checks to create a narrative of questioning locals, cajoling or evading guards, and working the treacherous streets.

Level: 2 (375 XP).

Complexity: 3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

Time Frame: Each character can make a check in this challenge once per hour.

Primary Skills: Diplomacy, History, Insight, Intimidate, Stealth, Streetwise.

Diplomacy (DC 13, three successes maximum): The character convinces a frightened citizen to talk or, on another check, persuades guards to let the party pass without any trouble.

History (DC 20, two successes maximum): After the party talks to locals or obtains a good overview of the area, the character remembers locations that help the party close in on the shard's position.

Insight (DC 20 [13 for the second check], two successes maximum): The character spots one of Lord Nevember's spies trailing the party. Alternatively, the character can tell which guards are willing to talk and which are spoiling for a fight. After each success, the party can attempt one primary Stealth check.

Intimidate (DC 13, two successes maximum): The character makes a group of guards stop harassing a lone civilian, who gratefully helps with information and contacts. Alternatively, the character exudes competence, impressing soldiers.

Stealth (DC 13, two successes maximum, usable only once after each Insight success): The character helps the party lose a tailing spy or evade a group of hostile guards. A result of 20 or higher on this check can be used to cancel a previous failure in the challenge instead of counting as a success.

Streetwise (DC 13, three successes maximum): The character knows how to work a crowd, who to talk to, and where to find the best views over the city. A result of 20 or higher on this check counts as two successes.

Secondary Skills: Athletics, Perception.

Athletics (DC 13): The character climbs a wall or building to find a good view of the surrounding area, granting a +2 bonus to the next History check or Stealth check during the challenge.

Perception (DC 13): The character spots people who might be taking an interest in the party's activities, granting a +2 bonus to the next Insight check or Intimidate check during the challenge.

Success: After corroborating eyewitness reports with observations around the city, the adventurers ascertain that one of the shooting stars fell just beyond the Wall. They also learn that the Wall has been breached at a heavily defended point near where the shard fell.

Failed Checks: After the first failed check in this challenge, the characters have a run-in with the group of street toughs described below. These bullies are after loot, not lives, and will retreat if the characters prove to be more than a match for them.

- ✦ 1 Lowtown kneebreaker, 2 Lower Quays guttersnipes, 3 Lowtown urchins (level 2; 700 XP; *Monster Vault: Threats to the Nentir Vale*™, pages 94 and 96)

If the heroes incur further failed checks, they meet up with one or more guard patrols (in the order given below). The guards will begin the contact by accosting the characters and giving them a chance to explain themselves. If the characters reveal their purpose and do not express any interest in starting a fight, the guards will direct the heroes to pay a visit to General Sabine (see below) at the Moonstone Mask and volunteer to join the forces defending the Wall.

If the characters meet General Sabine as they were directed and take on the mission she describes, they are considered to have succeeded at the skill challenge.

- ✦ 1 dragonborn mercenary, 2 guard drakes, 2 town guards (level 2; 675 XP; *Monster Vault*, pages 80, 82, and 171).
- ✦ 1 doppelganger sneak, 3 common bandits, 2 town guards (level 3; 825 XP; *Monster Vault*, pages 61, 170, and 171).

If the adventurers choose to fight either of the guard patrols and then are defeated, their victorious foes take them before Mayor Galt (see below), and this skill challenge ends in failure even if the characters have failed fewer than three checks.

General Sabine

General Sabine is aware of the shard's presence beyond the Wall. She couldn't care less that it's an artifact of Selûne. What concerns her is the fact that it's drawing plaguechanged creatures to it like flies to a day-old corpse. She enlists the party to draw the plaguechanged into a trap at the Wall near where the shard landed. Once the monsters are cleared from the area, the adventurers are more than welcome to retrieve the shard and take it far away.

Devil's Pawn: If the party includes a character who has the devil's pawn theme, the group encounters Mordai Vell as he finishes another attempt at wooing General Sabine (*Neverwinter Campaign Setting*, page 99). The capable-looking characters intrigue him, and he invites them to pay a visit to his mansion in the Blacklake District whenever they can stop by (see Event 2.4 for more information).

Mayor Galt

If guards bring the adventurers before him, he cites them for disturbing the peace and assigns them to defend a collapsed section of the Wall as punishment.

Spellscarred Harbinger: When a character who has the spellscarred harbinger theme sees the mayor, he or she feels nauseated. A vision of hundreds of fiery blue tentacles emerging from the mayor's skull briefly overwhelms the character.

Conclusion

No matter how the skill challenge turns out, characters learn that the shard they seek fell just beyond the Wall. See Event 1.4 for more information and the ramifications of actions during this event.

Event 1.4. The Wall

Combat Encounter Level 6 (1,419 XP)

Optional Themes: Devil's pawn, Harper agent, spellscarred harbinger

Attracted to the first shard, numerous plaguechanged creatures have congregated in this area and are about to attack. How this encounter runs is dependent on how the characters arrived here. In any case, the characters have time to choose their positions on the battlefield, as long as they are on the defenders' side of the Wall.

Success in Event 1.3: If the characters succeeded on the skill challenge in the Protector's Enclave, they receive information about how the defenses at the collapsed building have been bolstered. The structure is filled with traps, and the defenders have dug pits beyond the Wall. Other defenders inform characters of these dangers and offer occasional suppressing fire (see the sidebar).

Serving Lord Neverember: The characters are informed of all the facts given above. In addition, they might be leading a contingent of Lord Neverember's soldiers, which gives them an additional benefit in the upcoming battle. See the "Allied Defenders" sidebar for more information.

Failure in Event 1.3: If the characters failed the skill challenge in the Protector's Enclave, they enter the battle uninformed about the pits and traps in this area but still receive the benefit of suppressing fire (see the sidebar).

When the party arrives at the Wall, read:

An improbable pile of salvaged wood and stone, the Wall blocks all passage into the ruins. A recently demolished building has opened a hole in the defenses, and defenders from the safe side work to hold the breach.

Light: Bright light from the sun or from *everburning torches* at night.

Monsters: 3 guard drakes, 2 nothic mindwarps, and 24 human goons in waves (see "Tactics").

3 Guard Drakes — **Level 2 Brute**
Small natural beast (reptile) — XP 125 each

HP 48; **Bloodied** 24 — **Initiative** +3
AC 15, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12 — **Perception** +7
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 3 damage, or 1d10 + 9 while the drake is within 2 squares of an ally.

Str 16 (+4)	**Dex** 15 (+3)	**Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 18 (+5)	**Int** 3 (-3)	**Cha** 12 (+2)

Alignment unaligned — **Languages** –

2 Nothic Mindwarps — **Level 3 Lurker**
Medium aberrant humanoid — XP 150 each

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21 — **initiative** +8
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13 — **Perception** +2
Speed 6 — Darkvision, truesight 10

Standard Actions

⊕ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage.

Warping Gaze (illusion, psychic) ✦ **Recharge** when an enemy saves against this power
Attack: Ranged 5 (one enemy); +6 vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target grants combat advantage (save ends). Until the target saves against this effect, the nothic is invisible to every enemy but the target, and its *claw* deals 1d6 extra damage to the target.
Miss: The nothic has partial concealment until the end of its next turn.

Forbidding Glare (fear, psychic) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in the burst); +6 vs. Will
Hit: 1d8 + 4 psychic damage, and the nothic pushes the target up to 2 squares.
Miss: Half damage, and the nothic can push the target 1 square.

Skills Stealth +9

Str 16 (+4)	**Dex** 16 (+4)	**Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 18 (+5)	**Int** 8 (+0)	**Cha** 9 (+0)

Alignment unaligned — **Languages** Deep Speech

24 Human Goons — **Level 2 Minion Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid — XP 31 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +3
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 11 — **Perception** +2
Speed 6

Traits

Mob Rule
While at least two other human goons are within 5 squares of the goon, it gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Club** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 5 damage.

Str 14 (+3)	**Dex** 11 (+1)	**Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 12 (+2)	**Int** 9 (+0)	**Cha** 13 (+2)

Alignment unaligned — **Languages** Common
Equipment: club

Demolished Building: The centerpiece of this combat is likely to be the area between the two Wall sections. The outer wall of the building is now nothing more than a 5-foot-high obstacle. A set of doors on the northern wall allows access to the interior without having to clear the obstacle.

Wall: The two sections of the Wall here are 20 feet high on either side of the demolished building. Ladders on the west side allow characters to climb to the top without a check. The east side is tougher to climb (Athletics DC 20).

Ruined Buildings: The buildings in this area have collapsed; their roofs are now on the ground. Roof squares are difficult terrain. Squares that display a visible floor inside a building are clear terrain.

Guardhouse: The guardhouse, once the home of a wealthy citizen, is blocking terrain. The roof is 50 feet high, and its walls can be climbed (Athletics DC 13).

Pits: These hidden hazards (Perception DC 19 to detect for an uninformed character) are 10 feet deep and filled with sharp spikes that cause a total of 2d10 damage from a fall. Pit walls can be climbed (Athletics DC 13).

Rubble: This debris, filling many squares inside the demolished building and other parts of the streets and alleys in this area, is difficult terrain.

Traps: When a creature enters a square containing these hidden alchemical explosives (Perception DC 19 to detect for an uninformed character), the hazard explodes noisily, deals 5 fire damage to that creature, and destroys itself.

Shard: The first shard is lying in one of the squares along the eastern edge of the map. (A character who makes a DC 13 Perception check can pinpoint the shard's location.) The plaguechanged creatures in this area were attracted to the shard initially, but they shied away from it and left it alone when they discovered that picking it up caused them great pain.

Tactics: Plaguechanged enter the east side of the battlefield. They fight without tactics or teamwork, and none are perceptive enough to spot the pits and traps with passive checks. The monsters prefer to attack enemies at ground level. If no such targets are available, the creatures attempt to breach the wall.

The monsters attack in the following waves on the given rounds.

Round 1: 1 guard drake, 1 nothic mindwarp, 12 human goons.

Round 3: 1 guard drake, 8 human goons.

Round 4: 1 guard drake, 1 nothic mindwarp, 4 human goons.

Treasure: The adventurers recover the first shard. If the party managed to keep any monsters from infiltrating the city, grateful defenders offer a magic item of the party's level + 1d4 as a reward.

Optional Themes

If a character has an appropriate optional theme, you can use the related scene.

Devil's Pawn: During the height of the battle, a Mintarn soldier defending the Wall is injured when a blast of plaguefire eats through his armor. The

ALLIED WALL DEFENDERS

The party can benefit from the nonplayer character guards and defenders at the Wall in two ways. Make sure the players understand these advantages.

Suppressing Fire: Other defenders are engaged in protecting their sections of the Wall. (These defenders are actually on other wall sections that do not appear on the map.) Up to twice during the encounter, a character can call for suppressing fire from these allies. Doing so the first time requires a Diplomacy check or an Intimidate check (DC 9 as a standard action, DC 13 as a minor action). The second request requires the same skills, but the DCs increase to 13 and 20. On a successful check, the requesting character directs allied defenders to lay down a zone in an area burst 2 anywhere on the map. The zone lasts until the end of the requesting character's next turn. Any enemy that enters the zone or starts its turn there takes 5 damage. A creature can take this damage only once per round. If a character's check fails, another character can make an attempt later. Once the characters have successfully created two such zones, allied defenders cannot aid them further.

Lord Neverember's Troops: If Lord Neverember has sent auxiliary troops with the adventurers, these soldiers take command of the nearby defenders on the Wall. This situation grants the characters a +2 bonus to checks made to call for suppressing fire. In addition, once during the encounter, a character who requests suppressing fire and fails the check can change that failure to a success.

character sees the sign of Asmodeus branded on the soldier's chest before his comrades cover him up and carry him away.

Harper Agent: Numerous citizens manning the Wall are members of the Greycloak faction of the Sons of Alagondar. A Greycloak named Deegan recognizes a character who has the Harper agent theme and approaches that individual after the battle. Deegan heard that the character was involved in the death of Cymril, but Deegan doesn't believe the story after seeing the character defend the Wall. He invites the character to a meeting at the Driftwood Tavern in the Blacklake District if he or she is interested in freeing Neverwinter from Lord Neverember's grip.

Spellscarred Harbinger: In the aftermath of the battle, a vision of a plaguechanged human overcomes the character. The harbinger sees the person begging on the street before the transformation. The vision changes suddenly to show tendrils of blue fire dragging the beggar, screaming, toward the Chasm.

The Second Shard

The second shard fell into the Blacklake District. Among the crowds who watched the shooting star were a band of ruffians led by a halfling thief named Palas (*Neverwinter Campaign Setting*, page 155). They were fortunate enough to be near the place where the shard came down. Palas immediately saw the gem as something he had to have, so he snatched it up while his cronies held other would-be scavengers at bay.

Palas has taken the shard to his gang's hideout in the Swamped Docks. He and his gang know they've found something valuable, and they are ready for a fight to defend their prize.

Characters can learn of the shard's whereabouts in any of the first four events. They might begin by experiencing Event 2.2, 2.3, or 2.4, depending on which themes are present in the group. From time to time they can gather information in Event 2.1 that ultimately leads them to their goal. In Event 2.5, the adventurers confront the shard's current owner and others who desire the jewel.

Event 2.1. Into Blacklake

Roleplaying Encounter

Optional Themes: Renegade Red Wizard, Uthgardt barbarian

The Blacklake District is the center of resistance against Lord Neverember's rule. As a result, life in Blacklake is far more chaotic than in the Protector's Enclave, but it is also less oppressive.

As the characters look into the shard's whereabouts, they can question locals. Most citizens of Blacklake have better things to do than bother with inquisitive adventurers. The party might still have brief experiences in the district—see "Blacklake Encounters."

If the party includes a Dead Rat deserter, you should also use Event 2.2 before the characters locate the shard. A party that includes a character who has the Neverwinter noble theme also experiences Event 2.3 at some point before successfully tracing the shard. A Bregan D'aerthe spy, devil's pawn, or Harper agent can acquire information more reliably—see Event 2.4.

Between each of these scenes, the characters can learn one bit of the following information, in order, with a successful DC 9 Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Streetwise check. Each check represents an hour of working the streets.

- The shooting star fell toward the lake.
- Eralt Gavin, who heads the Friends of Blacklake Association, has been talking about a big fracas on the lakeshore last night.
- Eralt sometimes helps out Harrag, the bartender of the Beached Leviathan tavern down near the docks.

The party can find Eralt inside the Beached Leviathan. An old man dedicated to civic duty and strong ale, he tells the party—after pitching them his project

to clean up the lake—that he watched the falling star come to earth. "A bunch of folks went for where they thought it landed," he says, "but Palas and his gang of thieves shooed 'em all away and grabbed the thing."

Eralt knows that Palas and his gang make their home in the swamped docks, a collection of half-sunken buildings beneath the new Neverwinter docks. He gives the characters directions to the gang's base.

Blacklake Encounters

Choose the encounters you like for your campaign.

Strange Symbols: The party passes through an area where houses and street signs have been painted with the symbol of Asmodeus. A character can recognize the marks with a successful DC 8 Religion check, but any character who has the devil's pawn theme automatically recognizes them. Residents of the area have no idea why they've been marked, but they're afraid. Some have begun leaving offerings at a makeshift shrine to appease the Lord of the Nine.

For Love of the Sword: Twin sisters named Sylvara and Ayala lead a band of elves in the area. They challenge the party to a friendly duel "for the honor of Neverwinter." The elves want to test themselves before attempting to join the drow encampment in Castle Never's courtyard. Confident in their skill, the sisters offer their magic swords as a prize. If the adventurers lose, the price is that they serve as porters for the elves' move to Castle Never. Any city scene is fine as a map for this encounter.

- Sylvara (elf scout), Ayala (elf noble guard), 3 elf archers (level 2 encounter; 650 XP; *Monster Vault*, pages 110 and 112).

Treasure: Ayala's sword (a level 2 common or uncommon light blade) and Sylvara's sword (a level 3 common or uncommon heavy blade).

Bloody Rally: The party stumbles across a street rally against Lord Neverember led by the Nasher faction of the Sons of Alagondar. The adventurers have an opportunity to talk to the protesters and learn about the rebels. In doing so, the characters also get an earful about the superiority of the Nashers' methods of violent resistance.

As the party leaves or bypasses the protest, a detachment of Mintarn soldiers arrives to forcibly break up the gathering. The Nashers, anticipating the attack, aggressively resist. Unless the heroes interfere, both sides ignore them. If the characters choose a side, they meet a portion of the opposing force, as described below. Focus on the fight involving the adventurers, while the remaining nonplayer characters battle it out in the background. If the characters run into trouble, an allied nonplayer character might lend some help. Any city scene is fine as a map for this encounter.

Passive Perception (DC 13): A character notices that some of the Nashers wear strange bone pendants. If questioned, these Nashers know only that their leader, Arlon Bladeshaper, gave the pendants to them as badges of honor.

Renegade Red Wizard: On closer inspection, the character can see that the pendants are etched with Thayan runes, making each a scrying focus.

Uthgardt Barbarian: The character recognizes the pendants as the teeth of an ancient thunderbeast. These teeth have distinctive markings that match the skeleton that once stood atop Morgur's Mound.

- **Mintarn Soldiers:** 3 common bandits, 2 town guards, 5 human goons (level 3; 830 XP; *Monster Vault*, pages 170 and 171).
- **Nashers:** 1 Raven Roost grenadier, 1 Raven Roost harrier, 2 common bandits, 5 human goons (level 3; 780 XP; *Monster Vault: Threats to the Nentir Vale*, pages 91–92, and *Monster Vault*, page 170).

Event 2.2. Once a Rat

Combat Encounter Level 3 (800 XP)

Required Theme: Dead Rat deserter

Optional Themes: Renegade Red Wizard, Uthgardt barbarian

While the characters are in the Blacklake District, some Dead Rat gangsters ambush the party. No tactical map is provided for this encounter—any city scene that has alleys is fine.

Perception DC 13: The character notices that the street is suddenly empty, but scratching comes from nearby alleyways.

Light: Bright daylight, or dim light at night.

Monsters: 3 scurrying wererats, 2 wererat muggers.

When the attack begins, read:

Ragged humans step from nearby alleys. "Give us all you got," one of them snarls, as his features elongate into a rat-like snout, "or this could get messy."

Dead Rat Deserter: A character who has the Dead Rat deserter theme recognizes the distinctive signs of the gang before combat starts. He or she can head off hostilities by making the appropriate overtures and/or gang signs, represented by a successful DC 13 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check.

3 Scurrying Wererats **Level 3 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger), human — XP 150 each

HP 37; **Bloodied** 18 — **Initiative** +7
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13 — **Perception** +7
Speed 6, climb 4 (rat or hybrid form only) — Low-light vision

Traits

Regeneration
The wererat regains 5 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When the wererat takes damage from a silvered weapon, its regeneration does not function on its next turn.

Standard Actions

Dagger (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wererat must be in human or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage, or 2d6 + 6 if the wererat has combat advantage against the target.

Bite (disease) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wererat must be in rat or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 4 damage. If the target is granting combat advantage to the wererat, it also takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends). At the end of the encounter, the target makes a saving throw. On a failure, the target contracts wererat filth fever (stage 1; see below).

Move Actions

Rat Scurry ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wererat must be in rat form.
Effect: The wererat shifts up to its speed.

Minor Actions

Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The wererat alters its physical form to appear as a Tiny rat, a Medium unique human, or a hybrid until it uses *change shape* again or until it drops to 0 hit points. The creature retains its statistics in its new form. Its clothing, armor, and other possessions do not change.

Skills Bluff +6, Stealth +10
Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 13 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment dagger

2 Wererat Muggers **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger) — XP 175 each

HP 55; **Bloodied** 27 — **Initiative** +7
AC 16, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14 — **Perception** +3
Speed 6, climb 4 (rat or hybrid form only) — Low-light vision

Traits

Regeneration
The wererat regains 5 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When the wererat takes damage from a silvered weapon, its regeneration does not function on its next turn.

Standard Actions

Poisoned Morningstar (poison, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wererat must be in human or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 8 damage plus 5 poison damage.

Rending Bite (disease) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wererat must be in rat or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage, and the target is slowed and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both).
First Failed Saving Throw: The target contracts wererat filth fever (stage 1; see below).

Scrabbling Fury ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wererat must be in hybrid form.
Effect: The wererat pushes each adjacent enemy up to 2 squares and then charges.

Minor Actions

Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The wererat alters its physical form to appear as a Tiny rat, a Medium unique human, or a hybrid until it uses *change shape* again or until it drops to 0 hit points. The creature retains its statistics in its new form. Its clothing, armor, and other possessions do not change.

Skills Bluff +8, Stealth +12
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 20 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 12 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+3)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, morningstar

Wererat Filth Fever **Level 3 Disease**
Those infected by this disease waste away as they alternately suffer chills and hot flashes.

Stage 0: The target recovers from the disease.
Stage 1: While affected by stage 1, the target loses a healing surge.
Stage 2: While affected by stage 2, the target loses a healing surge. The target also takes a -2 penalty to AC, Fortitude, and Reflex.
Stage 3: While affected by stage 3, the target loses all healing surges and cannot regain hit points. The target also takes a -2 penalty to AC, Fortitude, and Reflex.
Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Endurance check if it is at stage 1 or 2.
8 or Lower: The stage of the disease increases by 1.
9–12: No change.
13 or Higher: The stage of the disease decreases by 1.

Tactics: The gangsters intend to beat their foes to death or unconsciousness, then loot the fallen. These Dead Rats are flush with the power of their newfound lycanthropy. They might flee or surrender, but only when half of them are down and all are bloodied.

Treasure: A single treasure of the party's level (see *Rules Compendium*, page 298).

Dead Rat Interactions

If a verbal exchange occurs, because violence was averted or because the wererats surrendered, the gangsters provide the following information.

- ✦ Neverwinter's Dead Rats make their base in sewers near the lake.
- ✦ Rsolk, a wererat from Luskan, leads the gang. He left Luskan left after a quarrel with the Dead Rat leader there, another wererat named Toytere.
- ✦ Rsolk sent some gang members into the swamped docks to retrieve something that fell out of the sky. They haven't returned yet.

✦ If questioned about their unusual weapons (see below), the wererats can reveal only that Rsolk gave them the items.

Optional Themes

If a character has an optional theme, you can use the following information.

Renegade Red Wizard: These Dead Rats carry weapons made partially of bone bound with necromantic energy, a specialty of Thay.

Uthgardt Barbarian: The Dead Rats' weapons have handles that look like they came from the bones of an ancient thunderbeast. These bones have distinctive markings that match a skeleton that once stood atop Morgur's Mound.

Event 2.3. Price of Nobility

Combat Encounter Level 3 (855 XP)

Required Theme: Neverwinter noble

Optional Theme: Renegade Red Wizard, Uthgardt barbarian

Nashers have gotten wind of the presence of a Neverwinter noble in Blacklake. They take matters in hand. Any city scene is fine as a map for this confrontation.

Perception DC 8: The character notices a group of angry humans and dwarves marching in this direction.

Perception DC 13: Some members of the group are wearing strange bone pendants.

Light: Bright daylight, or dim light at night.

Monsters: 2 common bandits, 2 dwarf bolters, 4 dwarf warriors, 5 human goons.

When the group meets the characters, read:

A large group of armed humans and dwarves blocks the street ahead of you. "The Nashers don't tolerate your kind here," one of them says. "Better run, and don't stop 'til you get home."

Negotiation: The Nashers are spoiling for a fight, but the characters can avoid combat by talking the rebels down, represented by three successful DC 13 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks during roleplaying. All characters take a –5 penalty to such checks if the party accepted Lord Neverember's help in retrieving the first shard.

The characters can instead agree to leave Blacklake, but the next time they attempt to enter the district, the Nashers attack without warning.

2 Common Bandits	**Level 2 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 125 each
HP 37; **Bloodied** 18	**Initiative** +6
AC 16, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12	**Perception** +1
Speed 6	
Traits	
Combat Advantage	
The bandit deals 1d6 extra damage against any creature granting combat advantage to it.	
Standard Actions	
Mace (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the bandit can shift 1 square.	
Dagger (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage, and the bandit can shift 1 square.	
Dazing Strike (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** when the attack misses	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the bandit's next turn.	
Effect: The bandit can shift 1 square.	
Skills Stealth +9, Streetwise +7, Thievery +9	
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+1)	
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment leather armor, mace, 4 daggers	

2 Dwarf Bolters	**Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 175 each
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23	**Initiative** +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14	**Perception** +8
Speed 5	Low-light vision
Traits	
Aimed Shot	
The dwarf gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and deals 1d6 extra damage with ranged attacks against creatures that have no cover.	
Stand the Ground	
The dwarf can move 1 square fewer than the effect specifies when subjected to a pull, a push, or a slide.	
Steady-Footed	
The dwarf can make a saving throw to avoid falling prone when an attack would knock it prone.	
Standard Actions	
Warhammer (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 4 damage.	
Crossbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 30 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage.	
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+3)	
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 10 (+2)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven	
Equipment chainmail, warhammer, crossbow, 20 bolts	

4 Dwarf Warriors	Level 1 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 25 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +3	
AC 15, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 14	**Perception** +2
Speed 5	Low-light vision
Traits	
Dwarf Solidarity	
The dwarf gains a +4 bonus to AC and Reflex while adjacent to a dwarf ally.	
Stand the Ground	
The dwarf can move 1 square fewer than the effect specifies when subjected to a pull, a push, or a slide.	
Steady-Footed	
The dwarf can make a saving throw to avoid falling prone when an attack would knock it prone.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Warhammer** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 4 damage, or 6 while the dwarf is adjacent to a dwarf ally.	
⊕ **Crossbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 30 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 4 damage, or 6 against a target that doesn't have cover.	
Str 13 (+1) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Wis** 15 (+2)	
Con 15 (+2) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+0)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven	
Equipment chainmail, warhammer, crossbow, 20 bolts	

5 Human Goons	Level 2 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 31 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +3	
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 11	**Perception** +2
Speed 6	
Traits	
Mob Rule	
While at least two other human goons are within 5 squares of the goon, it gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Club** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage.	
Str 14 (+3) **Dex** 11 (+1) **Wis** 12 (+2)	
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 13 (+2)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment club	

Tactics: The human Nashers form a battle line to protect the dwarf artillery, with the nonminion Nashers commanding the minions. They use deadly force only if the characters do. If two nonminion Nashers and half of the minions are defeated, the rest attempt to flee or surrender.

Treasure: A single treasure of the party's level (see *Rules Compendium*, page 298).

Nasher Interactions

The Nashers, through conversation or interrogation, can provide the following facts.

- ✦ Arlon Bladeshaper, the Nasher leader, has been looking for a fallen star. He thinks a halfling thief named Palas found it, and he has sent a crew to the swamped docks to retrieve it.
- ✦ If questioned about their pendants, which all the nonminion Nashers have, the Nashers reveal that Arlon gave them these items as badges of honor.

Optional Themes

If a character has an optional theme, you can use the following information.

Renegade Red Wizard: On closer inspection, the character can see that the pendants are etched with Thayan runes, making each a scrying focus.

Uthgardt Barbarian: The character recognizes the pendants as the teeth of an ancient thunderbeast. These teeth have distinctive markings that match the skeleton that once stood atop Morgur's Mound.

Event 2.4. Friends Like These

Roleplaying Encounter

Required Theme: Bregan D'aerthe spy, devil's pawn, or Harper agent

An adventurer who has a required theme has access to resources that can provide information more quickly and reliably than working the Blacklake streets.

Bregan D'aerthe Spy

The character can travel to Castle Never and speak to Xalbyn, captain of the drow encampment, about the fallen shard. The drow knows the following facts.

- ✦ The thing that fell to earth near Blacklake caused a great commotion.
- ✦ Soon after the thing was snatched up, a group of undead slipped out of the castle crypts and headed toward the swamped docks.
- ✦ Jarlaxle, the leader of Bregan D'aerthe, suspects Thayan involvement.

Devil's Pawn

If the party obtained an invitation to visit Mordai Vell in Event 1.3, he receives the adventurers at Vellgard Manor. The tiefling leader of the devil-worshiping Ashmadai sees the adventurers as tools in his ongoing efforts to control the city. If they ask him about the second shard, he knows the following details.

- ✦ An area of the swamped docks has been curiously active of late.
- ✦ The swamped docks are home to a dangerous band of thieves.

Mordai is unaware of the nature of the shard, but if others want it, then so does he. Through circuitous channels, he sends a group of devils to retrieve the shard even as he helps the party locate it.

Harper Agent

A character who made contact with the Greycloaks in Event 1.4 can visit Deegan at the Driftwood Tavern. There, Deegan introduces the party to Madame Rosene, the Greycloak faction's leader. If asked about the second shard, she knows the following.

- An enormous scuffle took place on the shores of Blacklake last night. Rosene doesn't know what they were fighting over.
- A group of Mintarn soldiers recently headed to Palas's hideout in the swamped docks.

Event 2.5. Swamped Docks

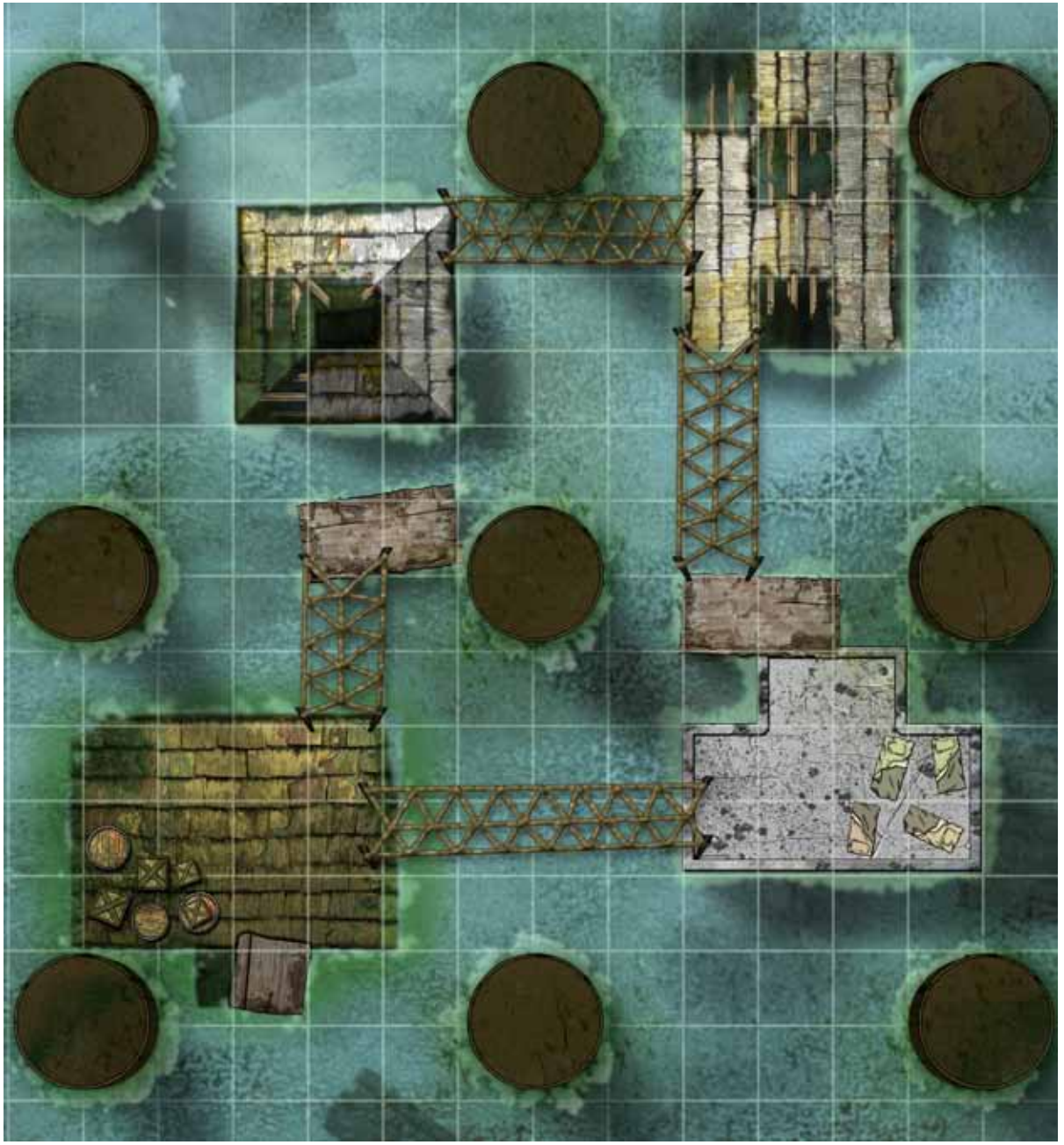
Combat Encounter Level 4–5 (925+ XP)

Optional Themes: Heir of Delzoun, Oghma's faithful, renegade Red Wizard

With the information from their various sources, the characters have no trouble finding Palas's hideout. Traveling to the swamped docks is not a significant challenge. Palas and his gang make their home amid the ruins of Neverwinter's original docks, now half sunken into the harbor beneath new construction.

Various factions active in Blacklake have converged on the docks to fight for the second shard. Palas is always present. A number of additional opponents might also face the adventurers, depending on which theme events the party experienced while searching for the shard.

The party can enter the map from any direction, including above, if they climb or rappel down the pilings. Let them come up with a plan.



Perception DC 9: As the party approaches Palas's hideout, the character hears the sounds of battle from a good distance.

Light: Bright light comes through the higher docks during the day, and torches light the scene at night.

Monsters: See "Determining Sides" below.

When the characters arrive on the map, read:
Broken buildings, partially submerged in trash-strewn water, cluster around the massive pilings of the new docks. Rope bridges connect some of the buildings, and numerous creatures fight across their length.

Determining Sides

If the characters got here without experiencing Event 2.2, Event 2.3, or Event 2.4, then their opposition is Palas's gang as given in the first entry below. If the characters experienced any of those events, then the nature of the opposition changes to account for them.

Palas's Gang: Palas (halfling trickster), 1 halfling trickster, 5 halfling thieves (925 XP).

Dead Rats: If the characters were involved in Event 2.2, remove 1 halfling thief and add 1 scurrying wererat (+25 XP).

Nashers: If the characters were involved in Event 2.3, remove 1 halfling thief and add 5 dwarf warriors.

Hell's Own: If Mordai Vell is aware of the shard due to the party's actions in Event 2.4, remove 1 halfling thief and add 1 imp (+25 XP).

Mintarn Soldiers: If the party met Madame Rosene in Event 2.4, remove 1 halfling thief and add 5 human goons (+30 XP).

Walking Dead: If the party met Xalbyn in Event 2.4, remove 1 halfling thief and add 2 grasping zombies (+75 XP).

Only Palas and his gang (whatever its composition) engage the characters directly. At the same time, a larger factional melee is occurring in the background among similar creatures. As the battle goes on, feel free to have a background foe take out another to speed the combat or make it easier for a struggling party. You can instead use the statistics here to add foes if the adventurers are easily winning the fight.

Potential Allies: All the creatures consider the characters to be rivals and better off dead. However, depending on the party's previous actions, the characters might forge a temporary alliance or two. If the characters acquire allies, the players should control them until the alliance ends.

Mintarn Soldiers: If the adventurers led Lord Neverember's troops in Event 1.4, Mintarn soldiers join the party on a successful DC 13 Bluff check or Diplomacy check. These warriors can be convinced to leave the battle and allow the party to keep the shard.

Dead Rats: If the adventurers dealt peacefully with the Dead Rats in Event 2.2, Dead Rats join the party on a successful DC 13 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check. Dead Rats turn on allies who try to keep the shard in the end.

Nashers: If the adventurers dealt peacefully with the Nashers in Event 2.3, Nashers join the party on a successful DC 13 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check. Nashers turn on allies who try to keep the shard.

2 Halfling Tricksters **Level 3 Lurker**
Small natural humanoid XP 150 each

HP 35; **Bloodied** 17 **Initiative** +9
AC 17, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 17 **Perception** +6
Speed 6

Traits

Nimble Reaction
The halfling gains a +2 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks.

Bamboozle
When the halfling ends a turn in which he did not attack and he has cover or concealment from a creature, he is hidden from that creature until the end of his next turn.

Standard Actions

Short Sword (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage, or 4d6 + 8 if the halfling was hidden from the target when he attacked.

Minor Actions

Smoke Pellet ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Area burst 1 within 10. Squares in the burst are lightly obscured until the end of the halfling's next turn.

Skills Acrobatics +12, Athletics +8, Bluff +10, Thievery +12

Str 14 (+3)	**Dex** 19 (+5)	**Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 11 (+1)	**Int** 11 (+1)	**Cha** 18 (+5)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, short sword, 4 smoke pellets

Halfling Thief — **Level 2 Skirmisher**
Small natural humanoid — XP 125

HP 34; **Bloodied** 17 — **Initiative** +6
AC 16, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14 — **Perception** +1
Speed 6

Traits

Nimble Reaction
The halfling gains a +2 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks.

Standard Actions

Dagger (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4 + 5 damage, plus 1d6 if the halfling has combat advantage against the target.
Effect: The halfling can shift 1 square.

Throwing Dagger (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4 + 5 damage, plus 1d6 if the halfling has combat advantage against the target.

Mobile Melee Attack ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The halfling moves up to 4 squares, using *dagger* at any point during the move. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks from the target of the attack.

Skills Acrobatics +9, Stealth +9, Thievery +9
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 10 (+1) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 14 (+3)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, 6 daggers

Imp — **Level 3 Lurker**
Small immortal humanoid (devil) — XP 150

HP 40; **Bloodied** 20 — **Initiative** +8
AC 17, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 17, Will 15 — **Perception** +8
Speed 4, fly 6 — Darkvision

Standard Actions

Bite ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage.

Vanish (illusion) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The imp becomes invisible until the end of its next turn or until it hits or misses with an attack.

Tail Sting (poison) ✦ **Recharge** when the imp uses *vanish*
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 poison damage and a -2 penalty to Will (save ends both).

Skills Arcana +9, Bluff +9, Stealth +9
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 16 (+4) **Int** 16 (+4) **Cha** 16 (+4)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Supernal

Scurrying Wererat — **Level 3 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger), human — XP 150

HP 37; **Bloodied** 18 — **Initiative** +7
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13 — **Perception** +7
Speed 6, climb 4 (rat or hybrid form only) — Low-light vision

Traits

Regeneration
The wererat regains 5 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When the wererat takes damage from a silvered weapon, its regeneration does not function on its next turn.

Standard Actions

Dagger (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wererat must be in human or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage, or 2d6 + 6 if the wererat has combat advantage against the target.

Bite (disease) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wererat must be in rat or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 4 damage. If the target is granting combat advantage to the wererat, it also takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends). At the end of the encounter, the target makes a saving throw. On a failure, the target contracts wererat filth fever (stage 1; see page 10).

Move Actions

Rat Scurry ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wererat must be in rat form.
Effect: The wererat shifts up to its speed.

Minor Actions

Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The wererat alters its physical form to appear as a Tiny rat, a Medium unique human, or a hybrid until it uses *change shape* again or until it drops to 0 hit points. The creature retains its statistics in its new form. Its clothing, armor, and other possessions do not change.

Skills Bluff +6, Stealth +10
Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 13 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment dagger

4 Dwarf Warriors — **Level 1 Minion Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid — XP 25 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +3
AC 15, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 14 — **Perception** +2
Speed 5 — Low-light vision

Traits

Dwarf Solidarity
The dwarf gains a +4 bonus to AC and Reflex while adjacent to a dwarf ally.

Stand the Ground
The dwarf can move 1 square fewer than the effect specifies when subjected to a pull, a push, or a slide.

Steady-Footed
The dwarf can make a saving throw to avoid falling prone when an attack would knock it prone.

Standard Actions

Warhammer (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 4 damage, or 6 while the dwarf is adjacent to a dwarf ally.

Crossbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 30 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 4 damage, or 6 against a target that doesn't have cover.

Str 13 (+1) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Wis** 15 (+2)
Con 15 (+2) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Equipment chainmail, warhammer, crossbow, 20 bolts

5 Human Goons — **Level 2 Minion Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid — XP 31 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +3
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 11 — **Perception** +2
Speed 6

Traits

Mob Rule
While at least two other human goons are within 5 squares of the goon, it gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses.

Standard Actions

Club (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 5 damage.

Str 14 (+3) **Dex** 11 (+1) **Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 13 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment: club

2 Grasping Zombies	Level 1 Brute
Medium natural animate (undead)	XP 100 each
HP 33; **Bloodied** 16	**Initiative** -1
AC 13, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 11	**Perception** -1
Speed 4	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison	
Traits	
Zombie Weakness	
A critical hit automatically reduces the zombie to 0 hit points.	
Standard Actions	
⨁ **Slam ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d12 + 3 damage, or 1d12 + 8 against a grabbed target.	
⨁ **Zombie Grasp ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and the zombie grabs the target (escape DC 12) if it does not have a creature grabbed.	
Triggered Actions	
Deathless Hunger ✦ Encounter	
Trigger: The zombie is reduced to 0 hit points, but not by a critical hit.	
Effect (No Action): Roll a d20. On a 15 or higher, the zombie is instead reduced to 1 hit point.	
Str 16 (+3) **Dex** 8 (-1) **Wis** 8 (-1)	
Con 13 (+1) **Int** 1 (-5) **Cha** 3 (-4)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

Roofs: Unless otherwise noted, the tops of the buildings in this area are clear terrain.

Rope Bridges: The bridges that connect the roofs are well built and do not hamper normal movement. A creature that tries to run or charge across a rope bridge must succeed on a DC 13 Acrobatics check or fall prone on the bridge. The roofs and the bridges are 5 feet above the water level.

Bedrolls: Palas and his cohorts have spread out their bedding on the roof of the building in the southeastern corner of the map. This area is where the group's monetary treasure (see below) can be found.

Boxes and Barrels: These containers of food and other staples, stacked on the roof in the southwestern corner of the map, are blocking terrain. They are stacked 5 feet high and can be climbed (Athletics DC 9).

Docks: Neverwinter's new docks are 30 feet above the roofs of the buildings.

Pilings: These supports are blocking terrain. Lashed with rope and covered in barnacles, they can be climbed (Athletics DC 9).

Water: The water is 2 feet deep, making these squares difficult terrain. A creature prone in the water has partial cover. Any character who falls prone in the water must succeed on a DC 13 Endurance check at the end of the encounter or contract filth fever (see wererat filth fever, page 10).

Tactics: Palas stays mobile and hidden as often as possible, preferring isolated targets. The second trickster helps to cover Palas. The halfling gang leader is unwilling to die to retain the shard, and he's likely to offer it in exchange for his life or throw it in the water to distract his attackers.

Treasure: Palas has the shard on his person. The party also finds 700 gp in coins, gems, and art objects among the gang's bedding. Characters can recover other items, depending on what is suitable for your campaign and the presence of characters who have optional character themes.

Heir of Delzoun: Several weeks ago, Palas robbed another heir of Delzoun. He still has the dwarf's journal, detailing research into the whereabouts of Gauntlgrym. The journal contains an important clue to the location of the city.

Oghma's Faithful: Members of Palas's gang recently broke into the crypts of the Waterclock Guild and recovered an intact waterclock. The waterclock is among the treasure here, along with notes on where the gang found it and partially developed plans to return and plunder the crypt further.

Renegade Red Wizard: If zombies took part in this encounter, each has a rune-scribed jet gem in its mouth, marking the undead as Thayan. These shambling corpses are nearly mindless, suggesting that other Thayan agents might have been nearby to take advantage of any victory the zombies played a part in.

The Third Shard

The third shard fell over the River District and landed in the Shard of Night, a floating tower that was once part of Selûne's great temple, Moonshadow Hall. The tower is now a tool of the Netherese, although it sees little use at the moment.

After starting their search with Event 3.1, the characters can learn of the shard's location in Event 3.2 and recover it in Event 3.4.

For more information on the Shard of Night, see the *Neverwinter Campaign Setting*, page 158.

Event 3.1. Orc Territory

Combat Encounter Level 3 (826 XP)

A band of enterprising orcs has a checkpoint at the entrance to the River District. The orcs charge non-orcs a toll to pass. No tactical map is provided for this encounter—any city map featuring a road is fine.

Perception DC 9: Approaching the barrier that walls off the River District, the character hears rough laughter, voices, and the clack of rolling dice from behind the nearest entrance. The characters might recognize that the voices are speaking in Giant.

Light: Bright daylight, or dim light at night.

Monsters: 2 battletested orcs, 2 orc archers, 4 orc savages.

When the characters enter, read:
Several orcs play dice in the middle of the road. More orcs doze against a nearby building.

The orcs demand a toll of 10 gp per character, or 5 gp for a half-orc or a spellscarred harbinger, in exchange for passage into orc territory. These orcs have no patience, and they attack if the adventurers argue or try to leave without paying. No tactical map is provided for this encounter—any city map featuring a road is fine.

2 Battletested Orcs	**Level 3 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 150 each
HP 50; **Bloodied** 25	**Initiative** +5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13	**Perception** +1
Speed 6 (8 when charging)	Low-light vision
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Battleaxe** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, or 1d10 + 10 with a charge attack.	
Handaxe (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage.	
Hacking Frenzy (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the orc marks the target until the end of the orc's next turn.	
Effect: The orc grants combat advantage until the start of its next turn.	
Triggered Actions	
Savage Demise	
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.	
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.	
Str 18 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+1)	
Con 18 (+5) **Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 9 (+0)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant	
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, battleaxe, 4 handaxes	

2 Orc Archers	Level 4 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 175 each
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21	**Initiative** +6
AC 16, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 14	**Perception** +2
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Handaxe** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage.	
Longbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 30 (one creature); +11 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage, and the orc can push the target 1 square.	
Clustered Volley (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in the burst); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.	
Triggered Actions	
Savage Demise	
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.	
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.	
Str 15 (+4) **Dex** 18 (+6)	**Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 8 (+1)	**Cha** 9 (+1)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant	
Equipment leather armor, handaxe, longbow, 30 arrows	

4 Orc Savages	Level 4 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 44 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +3
AC 16, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12	**Perception** +1
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Handaxe** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 8 damage, or 12 with a charge attack.	
Handaxe (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 6 damage.	
Triggered Actions	
Savage Demise	
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.	
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.	
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 13 (+3)	**Wis** 9 (+1)
Con 13 (+3) **Int** 8 (+1)	**Cha** 8 (+1)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant	
Equipment hide armor, 4 handaxes	

Tactics: This business venture is not worth the orcs' lives. The battletested orcs and the archers retreat or surrender when they are bloodied if all the orc savages have fallen.

Treasure: The orcs have collected 90 gp and have a pair of ivory dice (5 gp).

Conclusion

The locals, including the orcs in this encounter, heard about the falling star but don't know where it landed. If questioned, they suggest that Vagdru One-Ear, the bartender at the Fallen Tower tavern, might know more. This information leads the party to Event 3.2.

Event 3.2. The Fallen Tower

Skill Challenge Level 2 (125 XP)

Optional Theme: Spellscarred harbinger

The Fallen Tower is a popular tavern in the River District. Vagdru One-Ear is the tavern's orc bartender. He answers the adventurers' questions as long as they're paying for drink or food. The one-eared orc knows the following information.

- The falling star never hit the ground. Instead, it landed on the Shard of Night, the tower floating above the River District.
- Orcs dare one another to explore the tower, but no one who has entered the place has ever returned.
- The orcs know a way up. They can fire rope ladders on grappling hooks from ballistas on a ruined tower near the Shard of Night. The climb is long, but not otherwise strenuous for an orc. However, Vagdru believes the adventurers look soft and probably couldn't handle the task.

Allow the players to be creative with plans to reach the floating tower. A character who has the Bregan D'aerthe spy, Neverwinter noble, or scion of shadow theme has other resources as detailed in Event 3.3. The characters can also undertake the following skill challenge to impress the orcs into helping.

Fun with Orcs

The characters must show they are strong and tough, and thus worthy of the orcs' assistance.

Level: 2 (125 XP).

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Time Frame: Each character can make a check in this challenge once per minute.

Special: If the party killed any orcs in Event 3.1, then these orcs are angry; the adventurers take a -2 penalty to Arcana, History, Intimidate, and Thievery checks in this challenge. If the party defeated but did not kill any orcs in Event 3.1, then these orcs are respectful; the characters gain a +2 bonus to such checks in this challenge.

Spellscarred Harbinger: Vansi, the spellscarred leader of the Many-Arrows orcs, is in the Fallen Tower. She recognizes a character who has this theme as someone who shares what she sees as a blessing of strength. The orc leader is pleased to speak with another of the spellscarred. After a round of drinks, she ascertains the party's needs and reveals that she can order the orcs to help. If the adventurers care to gain respect from the orcs, however, they can undertake the skill challenge anyway. Vansi's approval provides the characters a +2 bonus on all checks in this challenge, and failure on the challenge costs the party no healing surges.

Primary Skills: Arcana, Athletics, Endurance, Intimidate, Thievery.

Arcana (*DC 13, one success maximum*): The character impresses the orcs with arcane tricks.

Athletics (DC 20, one success maximum): The character wins an arm-wrestling contest against Brog, the current Fallen Tower champion. Alternatively, the character demonstrates great strength in some other way, such as by lifting a full keg of ale in one hand.

Endurance (DC 13, one success maximum): The character survives downing a tankard of Vagdru's special brew or defeats Brog in a drinking contest. A character who fails this check loses a healing surge.

Intimidate (DC 20, one success maximum): After a staring contest, the orcs agree the character is so terrifying that no other test is necessary.

Thievery (DC 13, one success maximum): The character beats all challengers in a game of darts or knife throwing, or entertains the orcs with legerdemain.

Secondary Skills: History, Nature.

History (DC 13): The character likens an ally to respected champions or enemies of the orcs, granting a +2 bonus to that character's next Intimidate check.

Nature (DC 13): The character slips a revitalizing herb into an ally's food or drink, granting a +2 bonus to that character's next Endurance check.

Success: The adventurers convince the orcs to help them reach the floating tower.

Failure: The orcs agree to help the heroes only if every character drinks a tankard of Vagdru's special brew. After doing so, each adventurer loses a healing surge.

Event 3.3. Many Hands, Light Work

Roleplaying Encounter

Required Theme: Bregan D'aerthe spy, Neverwinter noble, or scion of shadow

A character who has one of the required themes might have access to assets that allow the party to reach the Shard of Night easily.

Bregan D'aerthe Spy

Bregan D'aerthe is interested in the Shard of Night and wants a report on its interior. The character can speak to Xalbyn, captain of the drow encampment, who furnishes the party with a scroll of Tenser's Lift (see "Ritually Speaking," *Dragon* 366) and the requisite material components.

Neverwinter Noble

If the adventurers are on good terms with Lord Neverember, he can provide them with a number of hippogriffs that can drop them off at the Shard of Night. The Lord Protector is unwilling to risk the hippogriffs' safety, so the creatures will not wait to provide transportation back to the ground.

Scion of Shadow

The Shard of Night's magic resonates with the character's blood, bringing to mind special commands taught only to Shadovar nobility. The character can call on these memories to summon a stairway of solid shadow that rises to the entrance of the Shard of Night.

Event 3.4. Into the Shard of Night

Combat Encounter Level 3-5 (800+ XP)

Optional Themes: Iliyanbruen guardian, pack outcast, scion of shadow

The Shard of Night, the current abode of a few shadow guardians, hovers 100 feet above Neverwinter. As it fell, the third of Selûne's shards punched a tiny hole in the roof and then landed on the tower's teleportation circle. The gem rests at the edge of the circle, sending ripples of light across its surface.

Entrance Alarm

A character who makes a successful DC 20 Arcana check realizes that subtle runes etched into the ledge that encircles the tower form a magical alarm. Any unauthorized intrusion into the Shard of Night, unless accomplished by a character who has the scion of shadow theme, triggers the alarm.

Disabling the Alarm: A character can deactivate the alarm on the entrance by making a successful DC 20 Arcana check or Thievery check. Failure by 5 or more triggers the alarm.

Triggering the Alarm: If the alarm triggers, a frenzied werewolf (a member of the Gray Wolf Uthgardt tribe on guard at the other end of the portal) immediately enters the Shard of Night through the teleportation circle.

When the characters can see into the Shard of Night, read:

Black and still, the tower floats above Neverwinter. Inside, all is shadowy except for a tiny, glowing white sphere resting on the outer edge of a circle of inert runes near the back wall.

Perception DC 20: The character notices shadows and wraiths lurking in the area.

Scion of Shadow: If a character who has this theme is present, the shadows (but not the wraiths) instead stand in the open near the teleportation circle, waiting 1 round after the characters enter before they attack.

Light: Dim light from the shadow magic that pervades the Shard of Night.

Monsters: 1–2 frenzied werewolves, 3 shadow stalkers, 4 wisp wraiths.

Iliyanbruen Guardian: Through the portal's hazy image, a character who has this theme spots a cart filled with Iliyanbruen relics near the ruined Shadovar fortress.

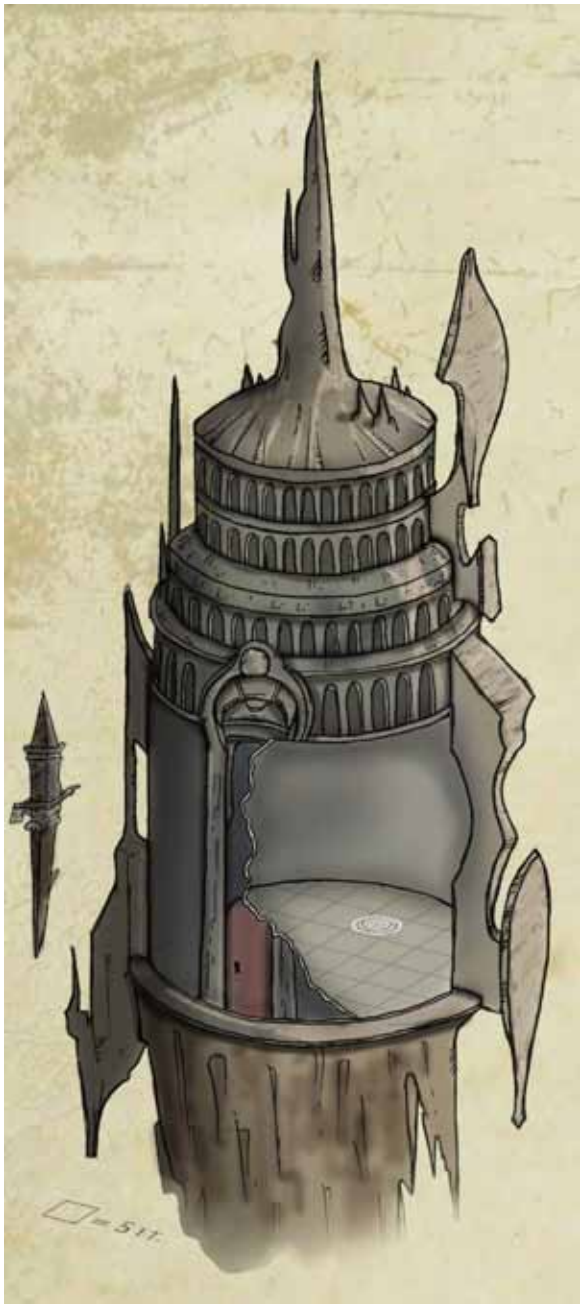
Scion of Shadow: A character who has this theme recognizes the ruins of the Netherese flying enclave through the portal, as well as the work going into its restoration.

Teleportation Circle

The teleportation circle, when fully functioning, is a two-way portal to Xinlenal, a crashed Shadovar enclave in Neverwinter Wood. At present, because of the shard that landed on it, the circle allows passage only from Xinlenal to here, not in the other direction.

A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Arcana check or Insight check understands that the shard is keeping the portal from working correctly. A character who succeeds on a DC 20 Arcana check or Insight check realizes that putting a second shard on the circle (a minor action) stops it from working in either direction. If the characters don't accomplish this by the start of the fourth round of combat, a frenzied werewolf comes through the portal and joins the fight against them.

If the characters place both of the other shards on the circle, the portal disappears entirely in a flash of light, leaving behind only the three shards to be reclaimed and brought back to Lady Jasmine.



4 Wisp Wraiths	**Level 1 Minion**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 25 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +3	
AC 13, **Fortitude** 11, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 12	**Perception** +0
Speed fly 6 (hover), phasing	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic, insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Shadow Caress** (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 4 necrotic damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the wisp wraith's next turn.	
Move Actions	
Shadow Glide ✦ **Encounter**	
Effect: The wisp wraith shifts up to 6 squares.	
Skills Stealth +8	
Str 3 (-4) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+0)	
Con 13 (+1) **Int** 4 (-3) **Cha** 15 (+2)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

3 Shadow Stalkers **Level 3 Lurker**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 150 each

HP 25; **Bloodied** 12 **Initiative** +9
AC 15, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14 **Perception** +3
Speed 8 Darkvision
Resist insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

Traits

Born of Shadows
The stalker can make a Stealth check to become hidden when it has concealment instead of needing total concealment.

Standard Actions

⨺ **Shadowy Touch** (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8 + 6 necrotic damage.

⨺ **Shadow Stalk** (necrotic) ✦ **Recharge** when the stalker uses *shadow step*
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6 + 8 necrotic damage, and the stalker shifts into the target's space and melds with its shadow (save ends). While the stalker is melded with the target's shadow, it moves when the target moves without provoking opportunity attacks, and it gains a +4 bonus to all defenses and a +5 bonus to attack rolls against the target. When the target saves, the stalker shifts to a square adjacent to the target.

Triggered Actions

Shadow Step (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: A living creature within 5 squares of the stalker drops to 0 hit points or fewer.
Effect (Free Action): The stalker teleports to a square adjacent to the triggering creature and gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls until the end of its next turn.

Skills Stealth +10
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 19 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+1)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common

Frenzied Werewolf **Level 6 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger), human XP 250

HP 78; **Bloodied** 39 **Initiative** +6
AC 18, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16 **Perception** +9
Speed 6 (8 in wolf form) Low-light vision

Traits

Regeneration
The werewolf regains 5 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When the werewolf takes damage from a silvered weapon, its regeneration does not function on its next turn.

Standard Actions

⨺ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The werewolf must be in wolf or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage, or 2d8 + 8 against a bloodied target, and the target falls prone.

⨺ **Bite** (disease) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The werewolf must be in wolf or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 7 damage. At the end of the encounter, the target makes a saving throw. On a failure, the target contracts werewolf moon frenzy (stage 1).

⨺ **Club** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The werewolf must be in human or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage, or 2d8 + 9 against a bloodied target.

⨺ **Lycanthrope Fury** ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The werewolf must be in hybrid form.
Effect: The werewolf uses *claw* and *bite*. Then the werewolf takes 5 damage.

Minor Actions

Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The werewolf alters its physical form to appear as a Medium wolf, a unique human, or a hybrid until it uses *change shape* again or until it drops to 0 hit points. The creature retains its statistics in its new form. Its clothing, armor, and other possessions do not change.

Skills Bluff +8, Intimidate +8
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 17 (+6) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)
Alignment evil **Languages** common
Equipment club

Werewolf Moon Frenzy **Level 6 Disease**
This disease starts with a fever, which soon becomes a violent and unpredictable rage.

Stage 0: The target recovers from the disease.
Stage 1: While affected by stage 1, the target takes a -2 penalty to Will.
Stage 2: While affected by stage 2, whenever the target becomes bloodied, it makes a melee basic attack as a free action against an ally adjacent to it.
Stage 3: While affected by stage 3, whenever the target is hit by an attack, it makes a melee basic attack as a free action against an ally adjacent to it.
Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Endurance check if it is at stage 1 or 2.
10 or Lower: The stage of the disease increases by 1.
11-14: No change.
15 or Higher: The stage of the disease decreases by 1.

Ledge: This shelf that runs along the outside of the tower is difficult terrain.

Walls: The buttresses and 25-foot-high walls can be climbed (Athletics DC 13).

Windows: The tower's windows are 20 feet above its base.

Tactics: The shadows and wraiths attack even if the alarm fails to sound. Unable to retreat, the monsters are inclined to fight to the death.

Pack Outcast: The Gray Wolf Uthgardt hate any character who has this theme, and thus the frenzied werewolves focus on such a character.

Treasure: The party recovers the third shard (and regains possession of any other shards they used to affect the portal).

Aftermath

If the adventurers deliver all three shards to the shrine of Selûne, Lady Jasmine rewards the party with 1,000 gp and three uncommon magic items of the party's level + 1d4.

The Shard of Night

If the party retrieved all the shards but failed to seal the portal to Xinlenal, the Shard of Night remains under Netherese control until the priests of Selûne can deal with the portal. Armed with the shards, Lady Jasmine might call on the adventurers for more assistance. The Netherese increase the number of guards within the Shard of Night and are ready for any future assault.

If the teleportation circle inside the Shard of Night is destroyed, Selûne cleanses the tower of shadow, restoring it to shining alabaster. The tower is renamed the Shard of the Moon, and the people of Neverwinter look to it as a beacon of hope and a sign of Neverwinter's rebirth.

If the Netherese lose the Shard of Night, they take a more active interest in Neverwinter's development. Netherese agents work to infiltrate Lord Nevember's nascent government and direct it toward recovering Neverwinter's lost treasures. At the same time, Shadovar assassins establish a base in the Blacklake District, hunting enemies of Netheril through the back alleys of the city.

The adventurers have made enemies of the Netherese and possibly gained insight into the machinations of other factions at work in the area. The future of Neverwinter is theirs to determine.

The Shard of the Moon

Floating high above Neverwinter, the Shard of the Moon becomes a powerful symbol for the forces of good. Placing all three shards of Selûne within or below the tower at night causes a stairway of solid moonlight to descend to the ground from the tower entrance.

Lady Jasmine and her fellow priests of Selûne act quickly to reclaim and rename the place. None of the evil denizens of the city is prepared to challenge their authority in this matter. If the adventurers part on good terms with them, the priests graciously allow the adventurers to visit the Shard as they please, particularly if they need a safe place to take an extended rest.

Any character who takes an extended rest in the Shard of the Moon gains an extra healing surge that lasts until he or she takes another extended rest.

About the Author

Andrew Schneider is an author and freelance game designer in the Washington, DC area. His recent credits include *Gangs of Wheloon* (a Living Forgotten Realms™ adventure), "Creature Incarnations: Fomorians" (*Dungeon* 176), "Channel Divinity: Ioun" (*Dragon* 385), and "Reign of Despair" (*Dungeon* 191).

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